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THE LITERATURE OF BENGAL

A BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL HISTORY FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES
CLOSING WITH A REVIEW OF INTELLECTUAL PROGRESS
UNDER BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

BY

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REVISED EDITION: WITH PORTRAITS.

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THACKER SPINK & Co.: CALCUTTA.
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE & Co.: LONDON.
1895.

Printed by S. K. Sha
ELM PRESS
29, Beadon Street, Calcutta.

GENERAL

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1895

TO

RAI SHASHI CHANDRA DUTT BAHADUR

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE DEDICATED AS

A TOKEN OF

GRATITUDE, ESTEEM AND AFFECTION

Dakhin Shahbazpur,
1877.

BY HIS NEPHEW
THE AUTHOR.

104379

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PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION.

ABOUT twenty years ago, I published in a local magazine a series of biographical and critical essays on Bengali writers, and they were published in a collected form under the disguise of a *nom de plume* in 1877. The publication did not receive much attention at the time, but it attracted the notice of that prince of Indian statisticians, Sir William Hunter. He embodied much of the information conveyed in my book in his valuable work on the *Indian Empire*, and he suggested that a more complete treatment of the subject should be attempted.*

The work of bringing out a more complete work on the subject has been deferred from year to year amidst other works which have claimed my more immediate attention. I do not regret this delay, as the information available on this subject is now far more satisfactory than it was twenty years ago. More attention is now given to

* "A complete treatment of the subject is still a desideratum, which it is hoped that Bengali research will before long supply. Mr.....whose volume has been freely used in the following pages would confer a benefit both on his countrymen and on European students of the Indian vernaculars by undertaking the task." *W. W. Hunter's Indian Empire* (1886) p. 347. *note.*

the study of Bengali literature by the people of Bengal ; a *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* or Academy of Bengali Literature has been formed, and has turned its attention to the restoration of the texts of our old authors ; and some excellent biographical works like the lives of Akhay Kumar Datta, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Madhu Sudan Datta have lately been published in Bengali. These encouraging circumstances have reminded me of my duty,—long deferred,—of bringing out a fairly complete account of Bengali literature. And the honour which the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* has done me, by electing me its first President, impels me to choose this occasion to place before my countrymen generally, and before European students of Indian vernaculars, a connected story of literary and intellectual progress in Bengal during the last eight centuries.

It is necessary to say one or two words about my predecessors in this field. Iswar Chandra Gupta, the first great poet of this century, an account of whose life and work will be found in Chapter XIV. of the present book, was the first writer who attempted to publish biographical accounts of previous writers ; but his attempt necessarily met with imperfect success. Iswar Chandra was followed by other Bengali writers of lesser note, whose treatises used to be read in the last

generation. Pandit Ramgati Nyayaratna then took up the task, and made enquiries into facts connected with the lives and writings of past authors, and produced a meritorious work a quarter of a century ago. The work has appeared in a second edition, but Bengal laments the recent death of the industrious and venerable Pandit. A number of separate biographical works, some of them very full and complete, have also been lately issued ; and I have in the present edition of this work derived much information from these separate works.

The additional information now available on the subject of Bengali literature, while it is most welcome to the compiler, has made the work of compilation more arduous. I had no idea, when I undertook to produce the present edition, that nearly all the work done twenty years ago would have to be redone. But as the work proceeded, this became more and more manifest. I have accordingly virtually rewritten most portions of the book, including the first five chapters as well as the last eight chapters, and I have added two new chapters on the schools of logic and law at Nabadwip. The work therefore may be regarded as almost a new one. The very limited time I had at my disposal did not permit me to perform this work as leisurely and carefully as I would

wish to do it ; but I hope nevertheless that the book will be found to be a readable hand-book, correct up to date, on the subject which it treats.

And the subject is one which is worth study. Literary movement in Bengal commenced at least eight centuries ago with compositions in Sanscrit, and Jayadeva, a native of Bengal, has left his mark on Sanscrit literature by his mortal song, now rendered into English by Sir Edwin Arnold. Bengali literature, properly so called, began with imitations of the song of Jayadeva in the fourteenth century, and with translations of the great Sanscrit epics into Bengali in the fifteenth century. Then followed the brilliant sixteenth century with its religious reform inaugurated by Chaitanya, and its study of philosophy and sacred law fostered by Raghunath and Raghunandan. The seventeenth century commenced with a great original composition by Mukunda Ram, whom Professor E. B. Cowell of Cambridge delights to call the Chaucer of Bengal. And the eighteenth century produced Bharat Chandra a master of verse, and Ram Prasad a master of song. A brighter epoch opened with the nineteenth century ; Raja Ram Mohan Rai was the first brilliant product of English education in India, and devoted his life to religious reform and to the formation of a healthy Bengali Prose. Iswar Chandra Gupta

was a versatile poet and satirist, and Akhay Kumar and Vidyasagar continued the noble work which Raja Ram Mohan had commenced. The great Madhu Sudan Datta wrote a noble epic in blank verse, Dina Bandhu Mitra and others wrote dramatic works, and Bankim Chandra Chatterjea has created a new school of fiction, and has brought Bengali prose to the state of its present perfection and grace.

These are the greatest authors that Bengal has produced, and whose memory the people of Bengal love to cherish. Of living writers I have not given any detailed account ; the time for a proper criticism of their work has not yet come. Let us hope that they will be the pioneers in literature in the next century, and that Bengal will shew as brilliant a record of progress in the next century as in this, which is about to close.

CUTTACK,
October, 1895.

R. C. DUTT.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

LITERATURE OF BENGAL

CHAPTER I.

Bengali Language and Alphabet.

It is not difficult to trace the gradual changes in the spoken tongue of Northern India by the help of the ancient works which have been preserved in Sanscrit. In India, as elsewhere, political and religious changes have been attended,—not with sudden changes in the spoken tongue, as is sometimes imagined,—but with a sudden recognition of such changes which introduce themselves slowly enough.

When the vigorous colonists of the Epic Age left their mother country in the Punjab behind, and founded powerful kingdoms along the Ganges and the Jumna, the Sanscrit of the *Rig Veda* was replaced by the Sanscrit of the *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads* in the cultured courts of the Kurus and the Panchalas, the Videhas and the Kosalas. This was the first change of which we have any recorded evidence, and we may roughly fix the date of this change at 1500 B. C.

With the rise of Magadha and the advent of Gautama Buddha, who preferred to preach to nations in the spoken tongue, the Pali language was recognized as the spoken tongue of Northern India; it had replaced the Sanscrit of the *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*. Scholars generally agree

with Burnouf and Lassen that the Pali stands "on the first step of the ladder of departure from Sanscrit, and is the first of the series of dialects which break us that rich and fertile language." The date of the literary and general recognition of the Pali language may be roughly fixed at 500 B. C.

In the centuries following the Christian Era, the Pali became gradually replaced by the Prakrits, the spoken dialects of the people. The heroines of Kalidasa speak Prakrit ; and while Dushyanta makes love in Sanscrit, the beauteous Sakuntala responds to his love in the softer Prakrit. Vararuchi, one of the "nine gems" of Vikramaditya's court, is the earliest grammarian who recognizes the Prakrits in his grammar ; and he distinguishes four distinct dialects of the Prakrit, *viz.*, *Maharashtri*, *Sauraseni*, *Paisachi* and *Magadhi*. We may fix the date of this literary recognition of the Prakrit dialects at 500 A. D.

The different Prakrits have been modified into the different spoken dialects of modern India. It is probable that the *Maharashtri* and *Sauraseni* Prakrits have been modified into the modern Hindi, and that the *Magadhi* Prakrit has been modified into the modern Bengali. Hindi received literary recognition in the twelfth century after Christ, the Bengali in the fourteenth century.

If we take up any large number of colloquial Bengali words derived from the Sanscrit, we shall invariably find in them traces of the Prakrit. If we take up any sentence at random from our every-day conversation, we shall find that most of the words have been

derived from the Sanscrit, through the Prakrit. We subjoin in a foot-note a list of words, furnished by Pandit Ramgati Nyayaratna, which will shew at a glance that the Bengali language is immediately derived from the Prakrit.*

The Bengali language is thus a descendant of Sanscrit, the mother of languages. It should be remembered however that a large number of local words, which were probably used in Bengal before the Aryans asserted their possession and spread their language in

*সংস্কৃত	প্রাকৃত	বাঙ্গালা	সংস্কৃত	প্রাকৃত	বাঙ্গালা
ত্বম্	তুমম	তুমি	বৃদ্ধ	বুড্ঢ	বুড়া
অহম্	অহম্মি	আমি	জ্যেষ্ঠ	জেটঠ	জেঠা
লবণ	লোণ	লূন	ভক্ত	ভত্ত	ভাৎ
প্রস্তর	পথর	পাথর	স্নান	হ্নান	নাহা
শ্মশান	মসান	মশান	সন্ধ্যা	সঞ্ঝা	সাঁঝ্
গৃহ	ঘর	ঘর	উপধ্যায়	উবজ্ঝাঅ	ওঝা
স্তম্ভ	খম্ভ	খাম্বা	যষ্টি	লট্বী	লাটী
চক্র	চক্ক	চাকা	ভবতি	হোই	হয়
কার্য্য	কজ্জ	কাজ	করোতি	করই	করে
অদ্য	অজ্জ	আজ	ব্যক্তি	বোলই	বলে
মিথ্যা	মিঠা	মিছা	ক্রীণাতি	কিণই	কেনে
বৎস	বচ্ছ	বাছা	বর্দ্ধতে	বড্ঢই	বাড়ে
কার্ষাপণ	কাহাবন	কাহণ	স্মরতে	সুমরদি	সুমরে
হস্ত	হথ	হাত	নৃত্যতি	নচ্চই	নাচে
বিদ্যুৎ	বিজ্জুলী	বিজলী	কথয়তি	কহই	কহে
দংষ্ট্রা	দাঢ়া	দাড়া	অস্তি	অচ্ছি	আছে
বহিঃ	বাহির	বাহির	ক্ষিপতি	ফেলাদি	ফেলে
বধূ	বহু	বৌ	পঠতি	পঢ়ই	পঢ়ে
চন্দ্র	চন্দ	চাঁদ	পততি	পড়ই	পড়ে
মধ্য	মজ্ঝ	মাঝ	মৃদ্নাতি	মলাদি	মলে

this country, have found their way into the Bengali tongue. Many familiar Bengali words connected with fishing and cultivation, with manufacture and arts, with domestic life and occupations, cannot be traced to Sanscrit roots, and must be of indigenous origin. With the growth of literature however these words have a tendency to disappear, and the Bengali language is gradually approximating to the Sanscrit in various ways.

This process is specially observable in the present century. Whoever has taken pains to compare the best works of the present age with the works of the last century, must have observed that the Sanscrit element has greatly increased in the Bengali of the present day; and this change,—and we consider it a change in the right direction,—is attributable to a variety of causes. The spread of European culture created the necessity of a prose literature. Our writers began to be familiarized with ideas which could not find expression in verse. Philosophy and the sciences came within the category of public tuition, and were learnt by an ever-increasing circle of students; and when they wanted to give expression to their ideas in their native tongue they found out its inadequacy. Philosophy and the sciences were in past centuries cultivated in the academies of Nuddea, but they were cultivated in Sanscrit, only by a few, and those few never conceived the idea of popularizing and spreading such knowledge. A more liberal spirit however was imbibed in this century from the West, and those who imbibed such notions were led to spread and popularize the knowledge they had

obtained. One of the first and foremost too who received such notions was the great Raja Ram Mohan Rai, whose life was devoted to religious reform as well as to the spread of knowledge; and Ram Mohan Rai is *the father of Prose Literature in Bengal.*

It was then that two great authors, Akkhay Kumar Datta and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, took up the subject; and it may be asserted truly that as Ram Mohan Rai formed the prose literature of Bengal, Akkhay Kumar and Iswar Chandra gave it its classical dress. They had few or no instruments to work with, they had no style before them on which to base their own, none to follow or imitate. Under such circumstances they turned their eyes to the Sanskrit language. That wonderful language is the richest in the world in its capacity for the formation of new terms from known roots; and the twin workers borrowed vastly from this store and developed Bengali prose.

Since that time the same causes have continued to operate. New ideas are daily imported from the West, and are entering into the spirit of our literature. We seek in vain for expressions suited to such ideas in our older works, and we naturally turn more and more to the Sanscrit, and borrow from that language. Michael Madhu Sudan, the greatest poet of the century, borrowed largely from Sanscrit. And Bankim Chandra, the greatest master of the Bengali prose, simplified the classical style of Akkhay Kumar and Vidyasagar and made it more pliable and graceful, but his indebtedness to Sanscrit was not less than that of his predeces-

sors. A comparison of a poem of the present century with one of the past century will at once indicate the difference.

We open a book before us at random, and find a poem entitled ঊষা in the *Sraban* number of the *Banga-Darsan*, 1280 B. E.* It begins thus:

অদিতি নন্দিনী, ঊষা বিনোদিনী,
প্রফুল্ল বদনা, মধুর ভাষিণী,
আলোক বসনা, কুসুম মালিনী,
এস তুমি দেবি, অবনীতলে।

With the exception of two words only, এস and তুমি, all the rest are Sanscrit words.

We turn over a few pages and come to another poem entitled দেবনিদ্রা in the *Bhadra* number. It begins thus:

কোন মহামতি মানব সন্তান,
বুঝিতে বিধির শাসন বিধান,
অধীর হইল বাসনানলে,
অবনী ত্যজিয়া অমর আলয়ে,
প্রবেশি দেখিব দেবতা নিচয়ে,
দেব পুরন্দর, রবি, হুতাশন,
বায়ু, হরি, হর, মরাল বাহন,
দেখিব ভাসিছে কারণ জলে।

In these eight lines there are only four words which are not Sanscrit, কোন, বুঝিতে, হইল and দেখিব. All the other words are Sanscrit, though some of them have Bengali terminations. The four words above mentioned are of course derived from Sanskrit roots.

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* This portion was written in July 1874, and the quotations therefore are from the *Banga-Darsan* of 1280 B. E.

The *Aswin* number has no poetry, and we therefore turn to the *Kartik* number. The poem on বায়ু begins thus :

জন্ম মম সূর্য্য তেজে,
অনন্ত আকাশ মণ্ডলে,
যথা ডাকে মেঘরাশি,
হাসিয়া বিকট হাসি,
বিজলি জ্বলে।

In these lines only two words ডাকে and বিজলি are not Sanscrit. The terminations are Bengali of course.

In the seventeen lines which we have quoted above, there are only eight words which are not Sanscrit. We now turn to the poetry of the last century, and select a passage at random from Bharat Chandra's *Annada Mangal :*

কহে সখী জয়া শুন গো অভয়া
এ কি কর ঠাকুরালি।
ক্রোধে করি ভর যাবে বাপ ঘর
খেয়াতি হবে কাঙ্গালি॥
মিছা ক্রোধ করি আপনি পাসরি
কি কর ছাবাল খেলা।
সুখ মোক্ষ ধাম অন্নপূর্ণা নাম
সংসার সাগর ভেলা॥
অন্নপূর্ণা হয়ে অন্ন দেহ কয়ে
দাঁড়াবে কাহার কাছে।
দেখিয়া কাঙ্গালি সবে দিবে গালি
রহিতে না দিবে নাছে॥
জননীর আশে যাবে পিতৃবাসে
ভাজে দিবে সদা তাড়া।
বাপে না জিজ্ঞাসে মায়ে না সম্ভাষে
যদি দেখে লক্ষ্মীছাড়া॥

Our readers will see at a glance that most of the words in this passage are non-Sanscrit, although mostly derived from Sanscrit roots.

We have dwelt at some length on this change because it is a change of which we should take note. The Bengali language, though undoubtedly derived through the Prakrit, seems to be fast divesting itself of the Prakrit forms, and approximating to the Sanscrit. The modern tendency is to use Sanscrit words rather than their Prakrit forms in all works of literature, except dramas and light fiction. To select some words from Pandit Nyayaratna's list, we prefer প্রস্তর to পাথর, গৃহ to ঘর, স্তম্ভ to থাম্বা, চক্র to চাকা, কার্য্য to কাজ, অদ্য to আজ, মিথ্যা to মিছা, বৎস to বাছা, হস্ত to হাত, বিদ্যুৎ to বিজলী, বৃদ্ধ to বুড়া, স্নান to নাহা in our literary works. The literary language is thus undergoing a transformation under our own eyes.

It would be a mistake however to suppose that we are imitating Sanscrit ideas. The reverse is rather the case, our notions, our ideas, our ways of thinking, our style of writing are day by day diverging from the classical Sanscrit model, and tending towards the European. It is words only that we are borrowing from the Sanscrit. Thus, at the same time, we are borrowing from two widely different sources.

We have now briefly indicated the origin of the Bengali language and its development in modern times. It remains now to make a few remarks with regard to the Bengali alphabet.

A cursory examination of the Bengali alphabet will convince our readers that it is derived and simplified from the Devanagari alphabet. This modification was made many centuries ago, and all that exists of Bengali literature from the time of Chandi Das and Kasiram Das was recorded in this modern Bengali alphabet.

But this does not take us to the origin of the Indian alphabet. The Devanagari character itself is of comparatively recent origin. The oldest Indian character known is not the Devanagari, but the older one in which Asoka's inscriptions are recorded. All the inscriptions of Asoka, except those in the Punjab, are recorded in what is called the *Indo-Pali* or *South Asoka* character. This is the earliest character used in India of which we have any knowledge now, and its date is the date of Asoka, *viz.*, the third century before Christ.

The late General Sir Alexander Cunningham, who was the greatest authority on the subject of the Indian alphabets, subjected the old *Indo-Pali* character to a careful examination, and came to the conclusion that this Indian character was of purely Indian origin.* And the majority of scholars who have studied and discussed the subject are of the same opinion. Professor Max Müller holds that India had no written alphabet before the fifth century B.C., and that the Indian alphabet was then borrowed from the West. But Dr. Roth expresses his conviction, based on prolonged Vedic studies, that the vast collection of Vedic hymns could

* See Cunningham's remarks on this subject quoted in my *Civilization in Ancient India* (London, 1893) Vol. II., p. 25 *et seq.*

not possibly have depended for existence on oral transmission, and he considers it as a *sine quâ non* that writing was known in Vedic times. Dr. Bühler holds that the Indian alphabet with its five nasals and three sibilants must have been developed in the grammatical schools of the Brahmans. Dr. Goldstücker holds that writing was known when the Vedic hymns were composed. And the profound scholar Lassen maintains that the *Indo-Pali* alphabet is of purely indigenous Indian origin.

It would appear therefore that some alphabet was formed and developed in India in the Vedic times; that probably a later modification of this alphabet is the *Indo-Pali* character in which Asoka recorded his inscriptions in the third century B. C.; that the ornate *Devanagari* character was a later development of the simpler and older Indo Pali character; and that the *Bengali* character is a simplification and later modification of the Devanagari character.

CHAPTER II.

Early Sanscrit Poetry.—Jayadeva.

A great development in Sanscrit literature and learning took place between the sixth and eighth centuries of the Christian Era, and all the writers who are known as Classical Sanscrit poets, and whose works are still popular in all parts of India, appear to have flourished in this age. Kalidasa took the lead, probably in the sixth century, in poetry and in drama, and was immediately succeeded by Bharavi. Harshadeva, Dandin, Banabhatta, Subandhu and Bhartrihari wrote dramas, fiction and poetry in the seventh, and the immortal Bhavabhuti closed the bright list in the eighth.* Classical poetry ends with him, imitators and feeble writers rose later on. Such were Magha who wrote *Sisupalabadha* in the eleventh century, and Visakha Datta who composed *Mudra Rakshasa* when the Musalmans were already in India.

Bengal does not come to notice by her literary work till this late period. It is said that Bhatta Narayana who composed *Veni Sanhara* was one of the Brahmans who came to Bengal from Kanouj in the time of king Adisura, but we know little of the king and less of the poet. And it is also said that Sri Harsha who composed *Naishadha* in the twelfth century lived in Bengal, al-

* For an account of Classical Sanscrit Poetry, Drama and Fiegan see my *Civilization in Ancient India*, (London, 1893) Vol. II., pages 258 to 302.

though according to Rajasekhara he was born in Benares.

The earliest poet whom we can claim to be a true son of Bengal is Jayadeva, the composer of the immortal song *Gita Govinda*; and we will devote the present chapter to an account of the life and works of this earliest poet of Bengal. He was a poet of the court of Lakshmana Sena, and flourished in the twelfth century, as has been proved by a colophon of an ancient copy of his poem discovered by Dr. Bühler in Kashmir. There is other evidence corroborating this fact. Jayadeva himself speaks of his contemporaries in his poetry; Bidyapati and Chandidas, poets of the fourteenth century, acknowledge Jayadeva to be their great predecessor; and Sanatana, a learned Vaishnava writer of the sixteenth century, speaks of Jayadeva as a poet of Lakshmana Sena's time.

Very little is known of the life of this, the earliest poet of Bengal. He was born in Kendubilwa, better known as Kenduli, in the district of Birbhum. His father's name was Bhojadeva, and his mother's Bamadevi. In early life Jayadeva left home, and it is said, began preaching the faith and love of Krishna. He had a few pupils and followers, and it is asserted that he attempted to establish a reformed religion like what Chaitayna did four centuries later. All this, however, we must accept with caution. Much of what little we know of Jayadeva is from Vaishnava writers, and they were naturally anxious to discover and establish a resemblance between so great a poet and their great Master. That Jayadeva's faith in Krishna

was ardent and deep, is amply shewn in his great work; that the same fervour was shared, not only by a few friends of his, but by a large portion of the people at large, is also highly probable; but that he began preaching the faith of Krishna like Chaitanya is perhaps the unfounded supposition of later Vaishnava writers.

After passing a few years in devotion and study, Jayadeva married and settled down in his native village. The daily routine of home life was however ill adapted to the feelings of the ardent poet, and he left home once more and travelled through northern India as far as Vrindavan and Jaypur, to which latter place he seems to have been invited by the king. Nothing more is known of the poet than that he survived his wife Padmavati, and that he passed his last days in devotions in his native village, where his tomb is yet to be seen surrounded by beautiful groves and trees.

The little that is known of the life of the poet is so mixed up with fables, that it is impossible at this distance of time to glean the truth from the falsehood. Such fables, however, are often based on true facts or circumstances; anyhow they represent the impressions of later ages regarding the life and times of their subject. As such, some of them may with propriety find a place in this brief sketch.

A curious story is connected with the marriage of Jayadeva with Padmavati. A certain childless Brahman, after many prayers and devotions, was favored by the god Jagannatha with an only girl, whom the father named

Padmavati and nursed with affection and care. When she attained her youth, her father was taking her to the god, intending to devote her to his services. In the way however he dreamt a dream, and the god told him to give his child in marriage to a certain devout followers of his, named Jayadeva. The Brahman did as this match-making god commanded. Jayadeva, then leading a life of study and devotions, was unwilling to encumber himself with a wife; but the girl would not leave him, and said she would follow him through life though forsaken. "One must love partridge very well to accept it when thrown in one's face," the sort of feeling one would naturally feel under such circumstances, but our poet knew better; he rewarded her persistent affections with marriage, and they made a very affectionate and happy couple ever after in life.

The death of Padmavati furnishes us with another story. She is said to have been so affectionate a wife that a false rumour of her husband's death caused her death. Such virtue however dwelt in the name of Krishna, that the poet no sooner muttered that name than his spouse woke to life again.

The most celebrated story however, connected with the poet's life, is that relating to the composition of a certain passage in the 10th *Sarga* of the *Gita Govinda*. The passage occurs where Krishna is represented as pacifying the wrath of Radhika, who had been offended with him for his promiscuous love, and had assumed a contemptuous silence towards him. মম শিরসি মণ্ডনং দেহি পদপল্লবমুদারং means, "On my head, as an ornament, place your beaute-

ous feet,"—these words being a touching appeal which an offended mistress seldom resists. When Jayadeva composed this, he looked on Krishna as an ardent lover; but after he had written the first portion, *viz.*, "On my head, as an ornament," he remembered that Krishna was a god as well; and he hesitated to add any thing about a human foot being placed on the head of a deity. Filled with doubts the poet went to bathe in the river. Soon after Padmavati saw her husband return and ask for his meals. The breakfast was produced and finished, and then he went to the room where the *Gita Govinda* was kept, and wrote something. After her husband had finished his meals, the duteous wife finished hers, when lo! her husband came in again and called for breakfast. The worthy dame certainly did not relish this unseasonable joke, but her husband was obstinate, and asserted that he had only then returned from his bath and had not yet taken his meals. The confusion of poor Padmavati would have been complete, but she stated that he had just before added something to his book. The book was examined, and what was the poet's surprise when he found that after the words, "On my head, as an ornament," which he had written before, the words "place thy beauteous feet" had been added. The mystery was soon cleared up. The god Krishna had marked the doubts which had arisen in the mind of his votary, and had solved the difficulty by personally assuming the shape of Jayadeva, coming into his house, and writing the passage himself.

There is more in this story than at first sight meets

the eye. The real hesitation felt at the passage was not by Jayadeva, but by later Vaishnavas who regarded Krishna as God, and the story was invented to explain away the poet's audacity.

It is said, that the king of Nilachala was offended at the widely spreading fame of Jayadeva, and wrote a book on the same subject and challenged comparison. Learned Pandits, unable or unwilling to decide the question, placed both the volumes at the temple of Jagannatha, calling upon the deity to decide it. It is said that the deity held the volume of Jayadeva on his breast, and threw away the work of king Satwika. Posterity has sufficiently vindicated the critical powers of the deity. Centuries have rolled away and the fame of Jayadeva remains undiminished, and will continue to remain so as long as the Sanscrit language is not forgotten.

Centuries have rolled away since the death of Jayadeva, and yet to the present day an annual fair is held at Kenduli by the Vaishnavas in memory of the departed poet. At this fair, fifty or sixty thousand men assemble round the tomb of Jayadeva for worship, and the Vaishnavas still sing of the amours of Krishna and Radhika immortalized in the *Gita Govinda.*

The Bengali was no doubt the spoken tongue of Bengal at the time of Jayadeva, as it is now. But the learned and the *elite* still considered the Sanascrit tongue as their noble heritage, and authors vied with each other in writing in this language. All learned works, therefore, all speeches in court, all traditional and genea-

logical fables, were composed and recited in Sanscrit. Learned Brahmans carried on their investigations in this learned language, and poets, desirous of ingratiating themselves with kings, composed and pronounced stiff artificial poetry in a dead language. It was thus that the Italians of the age of Dante and Boccacio wrote in Latin; it was thus that Anglo-Saxon writers of the time of the great Alfred made feeble attempts in the language of Rome. All attempts in a foreign tongue or in a dead tongue must necessarily be feeble; and thus, with the single exception of Jayadeva's works, all compositions of the twelfth century have been forgotten, and deservedly forgotten.

The *Gita Govinda*, however, is an exception, and a noble exception. It is a book of songs on the amours of Krishna and Radhika, divided into twelve *Sargas* or Cantos, each *Sarga* being divided into several *Prabandhas*, and each *Prabandha* consisting of several verses. The first thing that strikes the reader in this poem is the exquisite music of the songs. One would suppose the sonorous and somewhat artificial Sanscrit language was unsuited to so much softness and melody; but it is a master hand that wakes the lyre, and the ear is pleased and ravished with a flood of the softest music before one comprehends the sense. In the hand of a *Bengali* poet the Sanscrit language loses its august stiffness and assumes more than Italian softness; and constant yet melodious repetitions and alliterations make the *Gita Govinda* a remarkable and singular work in the Sanscrit language.

And if the book is rich in its music, it is no less rich in its descriptions. The blue waves of the Jumna, the cool shade of the Tamal tree, the soft whisperings of the Malaya breeze, the voluptuous music of Krishna's flute, the timid glances of the love-striken milk-maids, the fond workings of a lover's heart, the pangs of jealousy, the sorrows of separation, the raptures of re-union,—all these are clearly and vividly described in the song of the immortal bard of Birbhum.

The poem begins with a description of love-lorn milk-maids disporting themselves around Krishna in the cool shades of Gokul. Radhika sees this ; she marks with bitter pang the love of Krishna shared by less worthy rivals ; and yet the very sight of Krishna half tempers her sorrow. Nothing can be more beautiful than the description of the joy and delight which the forlorn and abandoned Radha feels, involuntarily and almost in spite of herself, at the very sight of him who is so dear to her heart. An English version conveys no idea of the beauty and softness of the original, yet such as it is, we quote from Sir William Jones's translation :

That god whose cheek is beautified by the nectar of his smiles, whose pipe drops in his ecstacy, I saw in the groves encircled by the damsels of Vraja who gazed on him askance from the corners of his eyes. I saw him in the grove with happier damsels, yet the sight of him delighted me. Soft is the gale which breathes over yon clear pool, and expands clustering blossoms of the voluble Asoka—soft yet grievous to me in the absence of the foe of Madhu. Delightful are the flowers of Amra trees on the mountain tops while the murmuring bees pursue their voluptuous toil,—delightful

yet affecting to me O! friend, in the absence of the youthful Kesava.*

In the sorrow of her heart Radhika retires into her grove and weeps. There the Duti sees her and describes to her afresh the amours of Krishna. Radha's heart bleeds afresh, and the workings of a jealous mind are powerfully described by our author. We will quote one passage in which she concludes a touching and bitter lamentation.

O, gale scented with sandal, who breathest love from the regions of the south, be propitious but for a moment: when thou hast brought my beloved before my eyes thou mayst freely waft away my soul! Love, with eyes like blue water-lilies, again assails me and triumphs, and while the perfidy of my beloved rends my heart, my female friend is my foe, the cool breeze scorches me like a flame, and the nectar-dropping moon is my poison. Bring disease and death, O! gale of Malaya! seize my spirit, O! god with five arrows! I ask not mercy from thee: no more will I dwell in the cottage of my father. Receive me into thy azure waves, O! sister Yamuna, that the ardour of my heart may be allayed!†

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*হস্তস্রস্ত বিলাসবংশমনৃজু ভ্রূবল্লিমদ্বল্লবী
বৃন্দোৎসারি দৃগন্তবীক্ষিত মতি স্বেদার্দ্রগণ্ডস্থলং।
মামুদ্বীক্ষ্য বিলক্ষিত স্মিতসুধা মুগ্ধাননং কাননে
গোবিন্দং ব্রজসুন্দরীগণবৃতং পশ্যামি হৃষ্যামি চ॥
দুরালোকঃ স্তোকস্তবকনবকাশোকলতিকা
বিকাশঃ কাসারোপবন পবনোঽপি ব্যথয়তি।
অপি ভ্রামাঙ্গী রণিত রমণীয়ান মুকুল
প্রসূতিশ্চূতানাং সখি শিখরিণীয়ং সুখয়তি॥

Gita Govinda, 2nd Sarga.

Our quotations are made from Haridas Hirachand's edition of the *Gita Govinda.* The above translation must have been from some other edition as slight differences are observable.

†মনোভবানন্দন চন্দনানিল
প্রসীদ রে দক্ষিণ মুঞ্চ বামতাং।
ক্ষণং জগৎপ্রাণ বিধায় মাধবং
পুরো মম প্রাণ হরো ভবিষ্যসি॥

But the hour of retribution comes at last. The Duti goes back of Krishna, and describes to him the wretched state to which he has brought his beloved. Krishna is seized with compunction, seeks out Radhika, and tries to pacify her wrath by a touching entreaty and appeal. The appeal is too lengthy for quotation, we quote a portion of it.

Speak but one mild word, and the rays of thy sparkling teeth will dispel the gloom of my fears. My trembling lips like thirsty *chatakas* long to drink the moon-beams of thy cheek. O! my darling, who art naturally so tender-hearted, abandon thy causeless indignation. At this moment the flame of desire consumes my heart, O! grant me a draught of honey from the lotus of thy mouth. Or if thou beest inexhorable, grant me death from the arrows of thy keen eyes; make thy arms my chains, and punish me according to thy pleasure. Thou art my life, thou art my ornament, thou art a pearl in the ocean of my mortal birth; O! be favourable now, and my heart shall eternally be grateful. Thine eyes, which nature formed like blue water-lilies, are become through thy resentment like petals of the crimson lotus; O! tinge with their effulgence these my dark limbs that they may glow like the shafts of love tipped with flowers. Place on my head that foot like a fresh leaf, and shade me from the sun of thy passion whose beams I am unable to bear. Spread a string of gems on those two soft globes; let the golden bells of thy zone tinkle and proclaim the mild edict of love! Say, O! damsel, with delicate speech, shall I dye red with the juice of *alaktaka* those beautiful feet which will make the full-blown land-lotus blush with shame? *

রিপুরিব সখীসংবাসোঽয়ং শিখীব হিমানিলো
বিষমিব সুধারশ্মি দূরং দুনোতি মনোগতে।
হৃদয়মদয়ে তস্মিন্নেবং পুনর্বলতে বলাৎ
কুবলয়দৃশাং বামঃ কামো নিকাম নিরঙ্কুশঃ॥
বাধাং বিধেহি মলয়ানিল পঞ্চবাণ
প্রাণান্ গৃহাণ ন গৃহং পুনরাশ্রয়িষ্যে।
কিং তে কৃতান্ত ভগিনি ক্ষময়া তরঙ্গৈ
রঙ্গাণি সিঞ্চ মম সাম্যতু দেহদাহঃ॥

Gita Govinda, 7th Sarga.

*বদসি যদি কিঞ্চিদপি দন্তরুচিকৌমুদী
হরতি দরতিমিরমতিঘোরং।

Who can resist such a touching, glowing appeal, and from such a handsome appellant? Radhika could

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স্ফুরদধর সীধবে তব বদনচন্দ্রমা
রোচয়তি লোচনচকোরং ॥
প্রিয়ে চারুশীলে প্রিয়ে চারুশীলে
মুঞ্চ ময়ি মানমণিদানং।
সপদি মদনানলো দহতি মম মানসং
দেহি মুখকমলমধুপানং ॥
সত্যমেবাসি যদি সুমতি ময়ি কোপানী
দেহি খরনয়নশরঘাতং।
ঘটয় ভুজবন্ধনং জনয় রদখণ্ডনং
যেন বা ভবতি সুখজাতং ॥
ত্বমসি মম ভূষণং ত্বমসি মম জীবনং
ত্বমসি মম ভবজলধিরত্নং।
ভবতু ভবতীহ ময়ি সততমনুরোধিনী
তত্র মম হৃদয়মতিযত্নং ॥
নীলনলিনাভমপি তন্বি তব লোচনং
ধারয়তি কোকনদরূপং।
কুসুমশরবাণভাবেন যদি রঞ্জয়সি
কৃষ্ণমিদমেতদনুরূপং ॥
স্ফুরতু কুচকুম্ভয়োরুপরি মণিমঞ্জরী
রঞ্জয়তু তব হৃদয়দেশং।
রসতু রসনাপি তব ঘনজঘনমঙ্গলে
ঘোষয়তু মন্মথ নিদেশং ॥
স্থলকমলগঞ্জনং মম হৃদয়রঞ্জনং
জনিতরতিরঙ্গপরভাগং।
ভণ মসৃণবাণি করবাণি চরণদ্বয়ং
সরসলসদলক্তকরাগং ॥
স্মরগরলখণ্ডনং মম শিরসি মণ্ডনং
দেহি পদপল্লবমুদারং।
জ্বলতি ময়ি দারুণো মদনকদনানলো
হরতু তদুপহিতবিকারং ॥

Gita Govinda, 10th Sarga.

not. If she had proper cause of offence, the offender has done proper penance, and all resentment is at an end. Krishna retires to his grove, and Radhika follows him, and is thus welcomed with an outburst of passionate welcome.

Enter, sweet Radha, the bower of Hari ; seek delight, O ! thou whose bosom laughs with the foretaste of happiness.

Enter, sweet Radha, the bower graced with a bed of Asoka leaves ; seek delight, O ! thou whose garland leaps with joy on thy breast.

Enter, sweet Radha, the bower illumined with sweet blossoms ; seek delight, O ! thou whose limbs far excel them in softness.

Enter, O ! Radha, the bower made cool and fragrant by gales from the woods of Malaya ; seek delight, O ! thou whose amorous lays are softer than breezes.

Enter, O ! Radha, the bower spread with leaves of twining creepers ; seek delight, O ! thou whose arms have been so long inflexible.

Enter, O ! Radha, the bower which resounds with the murmur of honey-making bees ; seek delight, O ! thou whose embrace yields more equisite sweetness.

Enter, O ! Radha, the bower attuned by the melodious band of Kokilas ; seek delight, O ! thou whose lips, which outshine the grains of the pomegranate, are embellished when thou speakest by the brightness of thy teeth. *

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* ১। মঞ্জুতরকুঞ্জতলকেলিসদনে
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস।
রতিরভসহসিতবদনে ॥

২। নব ভবদশোকদলশয়নসারে
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস।
কুচকলসতরলহারে ॥

৩। কুসুমচয়রচিতশুচিবাসগেহে
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস।
কুসুমসুকুমারদেহে ॥

৪। মৃদুচলমলয়পবনসুরভিশীতে
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস।
রসবলিতললিতগীতে ॥

Here we must pause. The pleasures of a re-union between two such amiable and enthusiastic lovers may be better conceived than described even by the inimitable Jayadeva. Enough has been said to indicate the character and merits of Jayadeva's poetry. He is the only poet in Bengal who has attained eminence by writing in a dead language, who has wrung such soft melody out of an artificial classical language, who has embalmed and perpetuated the amours of Radha and Krishna in songs which remain as the sole specimen of lyrical composition in Sanskrit literature.

We may here mention some scholars have discovered in the *Gita Govinda* a concealed allegory. The joys of Krishna in company with the milkmaids of Brindaban represent earthly pleasures which seduce our heart and lull our senses for a time. The love of Radha is true eternal felicity, to which the mind of the repentant sinner at last turns from the sensual and fleeting pleasures of this world. This may be the conception of the poet; and the following passage which we quote

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৫। বিততবহুবল্লীনবপল্লবঘনে
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস।
চিরমিলিসপীনজঘনে ॥

৬। মধুমুদিতমধুপকুলকলিতরবে
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস।
মদনরসসরসভাবে ॥

৭। মধুরতরপিকনিকরনিনদমুখরে
প্রবিশ রাধে মাধবসমীপমিহ বিলস।
দশনরুচিরুচিরশিখরে ॥

Gita Govinda, 11th Sarga.

from Sir Edwin Arnold's exquisite translation of *Gita Govinda* will shew that the five milkmaids, described by Jayadeva, in reality personify the five senses,—smell, sight, touch, taste, and hearing :

One, with star blossomed champac wreathed, woos him to rest his head,
On the dark pillow of her breast so tenderly outspread ;
And o'er his brow with roses blown she fans a fragrance rare,
That falls on the enchanted sense like rain in thirsty air ;
While the company of damsels wave many an odorous spray,
And Krishna laughing, toying, sighs the soft spring away.

Another gazing in his face, sits wistfully apart,
Searching it with those looks of love that leap from heart to heart ;
Her eyes—afire with shy desire, veiled by their lashes black—
Speak so that Krishna cannot choose but send the message back ;
In the company of damsels whose bright eyes in the ring
Shine round him with soft meanings in the merry light of spring.

The third one of that dazzling band of dwellers in the wood—
Body and bosom panting with the pulse of youthful blood—
Leans over him, as in his ear a lightsome thing to speak,
And then with leaf-soft lip imprints a kiss below his cheek ;
A kiss that thrills, and Krishna turns at the silken touch
To give it back,—Ah Radha! forgetting the too much.

And one with arch smile beckons him away from Jumna's banks,
Where the tall bamboos bristle like spears in battle ranks,
And plucks his cloth to make him come into the mango shade,
Where the fruit is ripe and golden, and the milk and cakes are laid ;
Oh! golden red the mangoes, and glad the feasts of Spring,
And fair the flowers to lie upon and sweet the dancers sing.

Sweetest of all that Temptress who dances for him now
With subtle feet which part and meet in the Ras measure slow,
To the chime of silver bangles, and the beat of rose-leaf hands,
And pipe and lute and cymbal played by the woodland bands ;
So that wholly passion-laden—eye, ear, sense, soul o'ercome—
Krishna is theirs in the forest ; his heart forgets its home.

It is likely, the whole poem, like Spenser's Fairy Queen, is meant to be an allegory ; but the allegory is so overlaid with rich, vivid, and melodious descriptions, that the reader misses the allegory, does not care for the allegory, and pours on the descriptions. The fame of Jayadeva rests not on the philosophic or moral signification of the *Gita Govinda*, but on the splendid imagery, the tender feeling, and the melodious descriptions with which the work is replete.

In his own words, "whatever is delightful in the modes of music, whatever is exquisite in the sweet art of love, let the happy and wise learn from the song of Jayadeva."*

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*যদ্‌গন্ধর্ব্বকুলা সুকৌশলমনুধ্যানং চয়দ্বৈষ্ণবং,
যচ্ছৃঙ্গারবিবেকতত্ত্বরচনাকাব্যেষু লীলায়িতং।
তৎসর্ব্বং জয়দেবপণ্ডিতকবেঃ কৃষ্ণৈকতানাৎ মনঃ,
সানন্দাঃ পরিশোধয়ন্তু সুধিয়ঃ শ্রীগীতগোবিন্দতঃ॥

Gita Govinda, 12th Sarga.

CHAPTER III.

Early Bengali Lyric Poetry.—Chandidas.

Fourteenth Century.

The student who peruses with pleasure the polished works of Bankim Chandra or Madhusudan will scarcely suppose that the stream of Bengali literature, which has only in recent days attained such purity and expanse, began to flow as early as the fourteenth century of the Christian era. And he will scarcely think that Chaucer of England and Chandidas of Bengal were well nigh contemporaneous writers ; that five hundred years have rolled away since Chandidas first wrote and sang ; or, calculating twenty-five years to a generation, that twenty generations have chanted the lays and ditties of this Father of Bengali Lyric Poetry.

Chandidas is the earliest vernacular poet of Bengal, but it is not possible to speak of him without saying something of Bidyapati, the earliest poet of Behar. Tradition has handed down the names of these two poets together ; they lived and wrote about the same time ; and their poetry has the same theme, the loves of Radha and Krishna. Jayadeva popularized this theme in his inimitable Sanscrit work *Gita Govinda*, composed in the twelfth century ; Bidyapati took up the subject and composed his songs in the vernacular of Behar in the fourteenth century ; and it is probable that Chandidas was only

animitator of Bidyapati, and drew his inspiritation from his contemporary of Behar. Thus the earliest Bengali poetry that is extant is indebted by the earliest poetry of Behar.

Bidyapati flourished in Behar in the fourteenth century. The descendants of the poet still possess the village of Bapsi in Tirhut by virtue of a deed of gift from Siva Sinha to the poet, dated 293 of the era of Lakshman Sen, *i. e.*, 1400 A. D. In this document Bidyapati has been described as a *Sukabi* or a poet of merit, so that he must have made his mark before 1400. A still more important document is the *Panji* or annals of Tirhut. It is an authentic history of that District, and began to be written in 1248 Saka, *i. e.*, 1325 A. D. The *Panji* gives an account of Bidyapati who is described as the son of Ganapati, and a courtier of king Siva Sinha. Siva Sinha ascended the throne in 1369 Saka, *i. e.*, 1446 A. D., and must therefore have given away Bapsi to the poet during the life time of his father who reigned no less than 61 years. We further learn from the *Panji* that Siva Sinha had three wives, Padmabati, Lakhima Devi and Biswa Devi, who after the death of their husband successively reigned for 18 months, 9 years and 12 years. Siva Sinha and Lakhima Devi find frequent mention in the songs of Bidyapati, and there can be no doubt that the poet lived about the close of the fourteenth century, and adorned the court of Siva Sinha and his father by whom his talents were recognized and richly rewarded.

The fame of Bidyapati as a poet had spread through-

out Bengal at the time of Chaitanya, and Chaitanya in his early youth was edified with the poetry of Bidyapati and Chandidas.

Glory to Jayadeva, the king and ornament of poets, and to Bidyapati the source of sweetness ; glory to Chandidas, for sweetness unequalled in the world, whose sweet and pure strains in prose and verse my Master Gaur Chandra (Chaitanya) relished with Sharup Rai.*

Again,

The Great Master (Chaitanya) with Ramananda Sen sings and hears day and night the songs of Chandidas and Bidyapati, and the sweet Gita Govinda.†

We have said before that Lakhima Devi the queen of Siva Sinha is often spoken of in Bidyapati's poems. Tradition has it that the intimacy between the princess and the poet was closer than was altogether justifiable, and that Bidyapati's death was caused by this illicit love. We have no hesitation in rejecting these stories altogether as the invention of later days.

We now return to Chandidas the subject of the present chapter. Chandidas was a native of the village of Nannur, in the District of Birbhum, about 24 miles to

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* জয় জয়দেব কবি নৃপতি শিরোমণি বিদ্যাপতি রসধাম।
জয় জয় চণ্ডীদাস রস শেখর অখিল ভুবনে অনুপম ॥
চকর রচিত মধুর রস নিরমল গদ্য পদ্যময় গীত।
প্রভু মোর গৌরচন্দ্র আস্বাদিলা রায় স্বরূপ সহিত ॥

Pada Kalpataru.

† চণ্ডীদাস বিদ্যাপতি, রায়ের নাটক গীত,
কর্ণামৃত শ্রীগীত গোবিন্দ।
স্বরূপ রামানন্দ সনে, মহাপ্রভু রাত্রিদিনে,
গান শুনে পরম আনন্দ।

Charitamrita.

the east of Suri, and was a Brahman by caste. That he was contemporaneous with Bidyapati is sufficiently proved by several poems which have come to us, of which the following is the most noted :

Chandidas heard of Bidyapati's merits, and became anxious to see him. Bidyapati heard of Chandidas's merits, and became anxious to see him. Both became curious. Bidyapati went off with Rup Narain alone for his companion. Chandidas too could not stay, but went off to see Bidyapati. In the way both sang each other's praise, and their hearts remained anxious for each other. Suddenly they met each other, but neither recognized the other. They knew each other when they heard their names. *

The traditions current about the life of Chandidas give us some clue to the nature of the rivalry which has ever existed in Bengal between the Vaishnava and Sakta creeds. Chandidas, as his name implies, was by birth a Sakta, *i. e.*, a worshipper of Chandi, Durga or Sakti, as the goddess is variously called.

It is said that in his early youth, Chandidas worshipped an image of Sakti which was called Bishalakshmi, and the poet often addresses the goddess in his works. As may well be imagined, the conversion of Chandidas to Vaishnavism has given rise to many tales. It is said that,

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* চণ্ডীদাস শুনি, বিদ্যাপতি গুণ, দরশনে ভেল অনুরাগ।
বিদ্যাপতি শুনি, চণ্ডীদাস গুণ, দরশনে ভেল অনুরাগ ॥
দুহুঁ উৎকণ্ঠিত ভেল।
সঙ্গহি রূপনারায়ণ কেবল বিদ্যাপতি চলি গেল ॥
চণ্ডীদাস তব্ রহই না পারই, চলল দরশন লাগি।
পন্থ হি দুহুঁ জন, দুহুঁ গুণ গাওত, দুহুঁ হিয়ে দুহু রভঁ জাগি ॥
দৈবহি দুহুঁ দোঁহা দরশন পাওল, লখই ন পারই কোই।
দুহুঁ দোঁহা নাম শ্রবণে তহি জানল, রূপনারায়ণ গোই ॥

Pada Kalpataru.

on a certain day, he saw a beautiful flower floating on the river where he had gone to bathe. He took it up and went to worship Bishalakshmi. The goddess appeared in person, and asked for the flower that she might place it on her head. The worshipper was awe-struck, and enquired what strange virtue the flower could possess, so as to induce the goddess to appear in person, and to wish to keep it on her head, instead of allowing the poet to place it at her feet. The goddess replied, "Foolish child, my Master has been worshipped with that flower, it is not fit for my feet, let me hold it on my head." "And who may *thy* Master be ?" enquired the poet. *Krishna*, was the reply ; and from that day the poet exchanged the worship of the goddess for that of Krishna.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that later Vaishnava writers have taken advantage of Chandidas's conversion to prove the superiority of their deity, and have invented this fable. One thing however is plain, namely, that the rivalry between the two creeds has prevailed in Bengal, as elsewhere in India, from remote times.

Chandidas has immortalized the washerwoman Rami in his poems, and numerous are the stories told about their loves. The poet was informed that he could not perform *Sadhan* till he had a fair companion, not by marriage, not for money, but one to whom his heart would be spontaneously drawn at the first sight. Our poet went out in search of such a person, and it was not long before he found one. A washerwoman was washing clothes on the river side, the poet saw her and was

fascinated. Day after day he would go to the river side with a fishing rod as a pertext, and sat there, gazing on the woman. Words followed and love ensued, and the poet left his home and parents, and ever afterwards lived with Rami, a washerwoman as she was by caste.

Chandidas was a renowned singer. One day, it is said, he went to a neighbouring village Matipur to sing with his paramour ; and when they were returning, the house in which they had taken shelter fell down, and they were both crushed and died in each other's arms. The story has perhaps little foundation in fact. We now turn to the works of these poets.

The poetry of Chandidas presents a striking contrast to that of Bidyapati. Both are poets of a high order, both sang of the amours of Krishna and Radha, both are noted for the beauty of their songs, but here the parallel ends. Bidyapati excels in the richness of his imagery, the wide range of his ideas, the skill and art displayed in his varied similes. Chandidas has but his native, simple, excessive sweetness in place of all these qualities. Bidyapati ransacks the unbounded stores of Nature and of Art to embellish his poetry ; Chandidas looks within, and records the fond workings of a feeling, loving heart in simple strains. In Chandidas's poetry there is a wealth of feeling and pathos ; Bidyapati combines this with a quick fancy, a varied imagery, a leaning for grace and ornament. The faults of the two poets are also characteristic. Chandidas is cloying, and sometimes monotonous, Bidyapati is often artificial

in his images and ideas. At the same time both display a knowledge of the workings of a lover's heart, and pourtray them feelingly and minutely,—the first troubled impressions of love, the resistless force of its influence, the bitter pangs of separation and jealousy, the workings of hope, the effects of despair.

We will try to illustrate our remarks with a few extracts. There is no English version of either Bidyapati or Chandidás, and we have therefore for our English readers ventured to render into English verse the extracts made from the poets. We need scarcely remark that our version will very often fail to convey the deep feeling which characterizes the original.

We make an extract at random from Bidyapati.* It describes the first impressions of love in the heart of Krishna on seeing Radha.

Soon did the lovely vision part !
'Tis gone ! I wake with sudden start !
A cloud-wrapped lightning sent its dart
Upon this troubled love-sick heart.
Scarce half removéd was her veil,
Upon her lips played half a smile,
And half a glance her sweet eyes shed,
And half her bosom was displayed,

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* সজনি ভাল করি পেখন না ভেল।
মেঘমালা সঙ্গে তড়িত লতা জনু হৃদয়ে শেল দেই গেল॥
আধ আচল খসি, আধ বদনে হাসি, আধই নয়ন তরঙ্গ।
আধ উরজ হেরি, আধ আচর ভরি, তব ধরি দগধে অনঙ্গ॥
একে তনু গোরা, কনয় কটোরা, অতনু কাঁচল উপাম।
হরি হরি কহ মন, জনু বুঝি ঐছন, ফাঁস পসারল কাম॥
দশন মুকুতা পাতি, অধর মিলায়ত, মৃদু মৃদু কহ তাহি ভাষা।
বিদ্যাপতি কহ, অতয়ে সে দুঃখ রহ, হেরি হেরি না পুরলো আশা॥

The rest her *anchal* did conceal,—
I gazed and felt my senses reel!
Her beauty, bright as burnished gold,
Love's amorous robe did sweet enfold,
And flung love's soft and silken chain,
Upon the hearts of prostrate men!
Her pearly teeth were sweetly placed
On ruby lips with beauty graced,
And soft she spoke,—I gazed in vain,
Insatiate gazed on her again!

Our readers must be struck with the *art* of the poet, with the similes and figures with which the small poem is so beautifully embellished, we had almost said, so thickly crowded. In this Bidyapati is in his own element. Not so Chandidas. He has neither the power nor the inclination to rove. He feels deeply, and sings feelingly. We quote from his poems a converse passage, a passage in which Radha is suddenly struck and entranced at hearing the very name of Krishna.* We translate it thus.

Friend! who hath named that name?
  Through me it steals,
  My heart it thrills,
My soul it doth inflame!
  Ah who shall tell
  What sweet doth dwell
In that beloved strain!
  I name that name,
  My soul's all flame!
Oh! will he come again?

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* সই কেবা শুনাইলে শ্যাম নাম,
কানের ভিতর দিয়া মরমে পশিল গো
আকুল করিয়া মোর প্রাণ ॥
না জানি কতেক মধু শ্যাম নামে আছে গো
বদনে ছাড়িতে নাহি পারে।
জপিতে জপিতে নাম অবলা করিল গো
কেমনে পাইব সই তারে ॥

We extract a somewhat longer piece* from Chandidas. It is a loving appeal from Radha to Krishna, and a more touching appeal it would be difficult to find anywhere.

Love ! how shall I my feelings tell ?
  Be mine, in death and life,
In after-lives, in future births,
  To be thy dutcous wife.
Yes ! to thy feet my heart be tied
  By silken ties of love,
I offer all, my heart and soul,
  I'll be your doating slave !
I've thought if in this wide wide world
  Another friend I own,
In loving voice to name my name.
  Alas ! alas ! there's none !
In earth, in heaven, in after-world,
  Alas ! who loveth me ?
O ! to thy feet I turn for help.
  To thee alone ! to thee !
Then do not spurn me, I am weak,
  O ! do not turn away
I've thought and felt, without thy help,
  I have no other way.
If for a moment thee I miss,
  A death-like trance I own ;
I'll keep and nurse thee on my heart
  E'en as a precious stone !

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* বঁধু কি আর বলিব আমি।
মরণে জীবনে, জননে জনমে, প্রাণনাথ হইও তুমি ॥
তোমার চরণে, আমার পরাণে, বাঁধিল প্রেমের ফাঁসি।
সব সমর্পিয়া, এক মন হইয়া, নিশ্চয় হইলাম দাসি ॥
ভাবিয়া দেখিলাম, এ তিন ভুবনে, আর কেহ মোর আছে।
রাধা বলি কেহ, সুধাইতে নাই, দাঁড়াব কাহার কাছে ॥
একুলে ওকুলে, গকুলে দুকূলে, আপনা বলিব কায়।
শীতল বলিয়া, শরণ লইলাম, ও দুটী কমল পায় ॥
না ঠেল না ঠেল ছলে, অবলা অখলে, যে হয় উচিত তোর।
ভাবিয়া দেখিলাম, প্রাণনাথ বিনে, গতি যে নাহিক মোর ॥
আঁখির নিমিষে, যদি নাহি দেখি, তবে সে পরাণে মরি।
চণ্ডিদাসে কয়, পরেশ রতন, গলায় গাঁথিয়া পরি ॥

The same intense feeling,—the same absence of all figures of speech, marks this poem. We shall pass on to another extract,* describing the despair of Radha in the absence of her beloved.

A cruel throb is in my heart !
  I'll leave my home,
  And thither roam,
Where never's known love's fatal art.

Friend ! who shall say that love is sweet ?
  I loved and smiled,
  My heart's beguiled,
And life-long sorrow is my fate !

For love should e'er a damsel sigh,
  O ! spare her shame,
  In fire and flame,
A kinder death, O let her die !

For I have felt this bitter grief,
  My eye-balls shine
  With ceaseless brine,
Says Chandidas, O for her life !

Seldom doth Bidyapati manifest such deep feeling and pathos. His strong point lies, as we have already said, in his imagery and embellishments. But nevertheless the poet of Behar too can equal the poet of Bengal in his own element when he chooses to divest himself of his art, and sings as only a true poet can

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* কি দারুণ বুকের ব্যথা।
সে দেশে যাইব, যে দেশে না শুনি, পাপ পিরীতের কথা ॥
সই কে বলে পিরীতি ভাল।
হাসিতে হাসিতে পিরীতি করিয়া, কান্দিতে জনম গেল ॥
কুলবতী হইয়া, কুলে দাঁড়াঞা, যে ধনী পিরীতি করে।
তুষের অনল যেন সাজাইয়া, এমতি পুড়িয়া মরে ॥
হাম বিনোদিনী, এ দুঃখে দুঃখিনী, প্রেমে ছল ছল আঁখি।
চণ্ডীদাস কহে, সে গতি হইয়া, পরাণ সংশয় দেখি ॥

sing; and the celebrated lines quoted below* are an instance to the point.

I 've gazed and gazed on beauty's glow,
E'er since my life began,
Insatiate still my eye-balls swim,
Fain would I gaze again!
I 've heard his honey-dropping words,
E'er since my life began,
Insatiate still my ear remains,
Fain would I hear again!
What happy nights with him I passed,
Unhappy yet I feel,
What years my heart I cooled on his,
Insatiate burns it still.

Over a hundred years elasped between the time of Chandidas and that of Chaitanya. Within these hundred years a host of poets of lesser note flourished. A large number of poems composed within this period are ascribed to Govinda Das. It is easy to perceive therefore that more than one poet of that name flourished. Indeed *Govinda Das* means servant of Krishna, and it is not unlikely that most of the poets who wrote about the loves of that deity assumed that coveted name. Balaram Das, Jnan Das, and many other poets of lesser note, flourished during that period.

Their poetry or rather song has the same characteristic qualities. They are always sweet, and often display a vivid fancy and considerable depth of feeling, and they all relate to the amours of Radha and Krishna.

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* জনম অবধি হাম, রূপ নিহারনু, নয়ন না তিরপিত ভেল।
সোই মধুর বোল, শ্রবণহি শুনলু, শ্রুতিপথে পরশন গেল॥
কত মধুযামিনী, রভসে গোঁয়াইনু, না বুঝিনু কৈছন কেল।
লাখ লাখ যুগ, হিয়ে হিয়ে রাখনু, তবু হিয়া জুড়ন না গেল॥

We have examined the merits of the best poets of the class, and we think it unnecessary to go over the entire field. There is a tolerably good collection of their works in the *Pada Kalpataru*, and it is by no means a waste of time to go over these old authors, even from a literary point of view. The admirer of modern Bengali literature will be surprised at the sweetness and beauty that pervade these old compositions. That they have been preserved so long and so carefully is owing to the Vaishnavas, and to them, therefore, Bengal owes an immense debt of gratitude.

CHAPTER IV.

Kasiram Das and his Mahabharata.

Fifteenth century.

In the last Chapter we have spoken of the lyric poetry of the fourteenth century. It was probably in the fifteenth century that Kasiram Das undertook and performed the mighty task of translating the Sanscrit epic *Mahabharata* into Bengali verse. Kasiram's work is the first great and national literary work in the Bengali language, it is a foundation of rock on which the national literature of Bengal has been subsequently built up. Chandidas is the *Father of Bengali song*; Kasiram Das is the *Father of Bengali literature*, properly so called.

Unfortunately we know little of the life of this great poet. He was born in Singi, near Katwa in the District of Burdwan; and the supposed site of his house is still pointed out as *Keser Bhita*. He was a Kayastha by caste, and his bold endeavour to popularise the great epic of ancient India among his countrymen in simple Bengali verse was regarded with suspicion and distrust. A Brahman poet Krittibas followed his example, and translated the other great epic Ramayana into Bengali verse, and his laudable work too was viewed with jealousy and displeasure. And a popular verse is often repeated :—

কাশীদেসে, কৃত্তিবেসে, আর বামুনবেসে,
এই তিন সর্ব্বনেশে।

"Kasidas and Krittibas, and those who constantly seek to associate with Brahmans ;—these are dangerous men."

Such narrow jealousy however does not turn the tide of knowledge, and the great poet of the fifteenth century first led his countrymen into that store-house of Sanscrit poetry and learning which we have learnt to appreciate more and more with the lapse of centuries and the increase of knowledge.

The main story of the *Mahabharata* is well known. It describes the contest between the Pandavas and the Kuru princes for the throne of Kuruland. The Pandavas were banished at first, but they made powerful friends and demanded their share, and the western portion of Kuruland, with Indraprastha for its capital, was ceded to them. They staked and lost this kingdom however at dice, and retired into the wilderness, according to their plighted word. On the expiry of the prescribed period they came forward again and demanded a share of the kingdom. The Kuru princes refused this,—and the consequence was a disastrous battle in which all the great princes of Northern India took part, and in which the Kuru tribe was well nigh exterminated. The Pandavas won, and established their rule in the Kuru kingdom.

Connected with the main story, the manners and customs of the times, the pomp and splendour of courts, the rules of war and peace, the power and jealousies of kings, and the heroism and chivalry of the Kshatriya warriors of ancient India have been described with graphic force, and unsurpassed power.

On the other hand, the inner workings of the human mind and all its varied feelings, love, hatred, jealousy between rival princes, revenge that knew no satiety, the patience of a suffering saint, the greatness of a true hero ;—all the various shades of human character, from the sublime virtues of Bhishma who drew forth tears of admiration from the enemies who killed him, to the fiery jealousies of Duryodhana who engaged the whole of northern India in a disastrous war rather than cede five villages to his much-hated cousins ;—all that a true poet and a great poet is capable of, has been worked out with pencil of a Homer. Homer's characters are not more life-like than the men of flesh and blood, of determination and valour, who figure in the great Sanscrit epic ; and Homer's incidents are not more sublime in conception or graphic in description than those of the Mahabharata. The world has seen no nobler creation of the imagination than the great epic of the Hindus.

But while the epic of Homer was collected and preserved by Pisistratus the ruler of Athens, as early as the sixth century before Christ, no Hindu ruler of antiquity took the trouble of preserving the great Hindu epic from subsequent additions and interpolations. Generations of poets have accordingly added to the old epic until it has almost changed its character, and the crystal stream of true epic poetry is lost in a wide morass of mythical episodes and mythological stories, of cosmogony and theogony, of never ending didactic and dogmatic instructions. All this episodical

matter fills three-fourths of the epic in its present shape; the leading narrative barely takes up a fourth part.

When the evil had been done, an attempt was made to prevent further expansion of the work. The contents of the epic were described in a sort of preface, and the number of *slokas* or couplets in each Book was given, so as to prevent further addition. The curious reader will find these numbers in the note given below,* as well as the number of couplets actually found in the published edition of the work.

The total number of couplets enumerated in the preface comes to near eighty-five thousand. But the limit so fixed has been exceeded in still later ages, further additions have been made, and the Sanscrit *Mahabharata* now published contains over ninety thousand

Books.	*Sections.*	*Number of couplets according to preface.*	*Number of couplets in the Asiatic Society's Edition.*
* Adi	227	8884	8479
Sabha	78	2511	2709
Vana	269	11664	17478
Virata	67	2050	2376
Udyoga	186	6698	7656
Bhishma	117	5884	5656
Drona	170	8909	9650
Karna	69	4964	5046
Salya	59	3220	3671
Sauptika	18	870	811
Stri	27	775	827
Santi	339	14732	13943
Anusasana	146	8000	7796
Asvamedha	103	3320	2900
Asramavasa	42	1506	1105
Mausala	8	320	292
Mahaprasthana	3	320	109
Sarga	5	209	312
	1,933	84,836	90,816

couplets, excluding the *Harivansa.* It is an encyclopædic work; all the tales and traditions and mythological stories of India have been comprehended in this one work. As a store-house of Hindu traditions, it has thus been rendered unique and invaluable; as an epic poem it has been ruined.

Endeavours have been made from time to time to disentangle the leading narrative from episodical matter, and to publish it separately. But as yet, such endeavours have not met with success.*

In undertaking to translate this vast work into Bengali verse for Bengali readers, Kasiram Das very wisely decided to condense the matter in the translation. The Bengali version is a little over one-third of the original Sanscrit poem in extent, consisting of about thirty-six thousand couplets. The work of condensing the original epic has been performed with thoughtful care; and while mere verbal descriptions have been greatly abridged, the stories and incidents have been repeated in the Bengali version with scarcely any important omission.

One instance, selected at random, will convey to our readers the process adopted by the translator. The famous story of Sakuntala has been told in the original *Mahabharata* in six sections of the First Book, *viz.*

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* The edition of the great epic published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal is well known to all scholars. A meritorious translation in Bengali prose by the late munificent Kali Prasanna Sinha is the version now in general use in Bengal. An English translation of the work was undertaken and nearly completed by the late Pratap Chandra Rai. His widow has piously undertaken to complete this work.

sections LXIX to LXXIV. Section LXIX, giving an account of Dushyanta's hunt in thirty-one couplets, has been reduced to eight couplets by Kasiram. Section LXX, describing king Dushyanta's entry into Kanva's forest in fifty couplets, has been reduced to ten couplets in Bengali. Section LXXI, narrating Dushyanta's meeting and conversation with Sakuntala, has been reduced from forty-two couplets in the original to twenty-five in the translation. Section LXXII concludes Sakuntala's story of her birth in nineteen couplets in Sanscrit, and has been rendered in nineteen couplets by Kasiram. Section LXXIII speaks of Dushyanta's marriage with Sakuntala in thirty-three couplets, which have been rendered in twenty-four in Bengali. And section LXXIV narrates the subsequent story of Sakuntala and of the birth of Bharata in one hundred thirty-eight couplets, which have been translated in eighty-six in the Bengali version. We reproduce below the whole of section LXXII with Kasiram's version, and the reader will find that Kasiram can be a faithful translator when he is not called upon to condense the matter.* Occasionally, however,

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* আদিপর্ব্ব ৭২ অধ্যায়।

কণ্ব উবাচ।

এবমুক্তস্তয়া শক্রঃ সন্দিদেশ সদাগতিম্।
প্রাতিষ্ঠত তদা কালে মেনকা বায়ুনা সহ ॥
অথাপশ্যৎ বরারোহা তপসা দগ্ধকিল্বিষম্।
বিশ্বামিত্রং তপ্যমানং মেনকা ভীরুরাশ্রমে ॥
অভিবাদ্য ততঃ সা তং প্রাক্রীড়ৎ ঋষিসন্নিধৌ।
অপোবাহ চ বাসোঽস্যা মারুতঃ শশিসন্নিভম্ ॥

a wide divergence is noticeable between the original and the translation, and in some places an additional section or story is found in the translation which does not

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সাগচ্ছৎ ত্বরিতা ভূমিং বাসস্তদভিলিপ্সতী।
স্ময়মানেব সব্রীড়ং মারুতং বরবর্ণিনী।
পশ্যতস্তত্র তত্রর্ষেরপ্যগ্নিসমতেজসঃ॥
বিশ্বামিত্রস্তত স্তাং তু বিষমস্থামনিন্দিতাম্।
গৃদ্ধাং বাসসি সম্ভ্রান্তাং মেনকাং মুনিসত্তমঃ।
অনির্দেশ্যবয়োরূপাং অপশ্যদ্বিবৃতাং তদা॥
তস্যা রূপগুণান্ দৃষ্ট্বা স তু বিপ্রর্ষভস্তদা।
চকার ভাবং সংসর্গাৎ তয়া কামবশং গতঃ॥
ন্যমন্ত্রযত চাপ্যেনাং সা চাপ্যৈচ্ছৎ অনিন্দিতা।
তৌ তত্র সুচিরং কালং উভৌ ব্যহরতাং তদা॥
রমমাণৌ যথাকামং যথৈক দিবসং তথা।
জনয়ামাস স মুনির্মেনকায়াং শকুন্তলাম্॥
প্রস্থে হিমবতো রম্যে মালিনীমভিতো নদীম্।
জাতমুৎসৃজ্য তং গর্ভং মেনকা মালিনীমনু।
কৃতকার্য্যা ততস্তূর্ণং অগচ্ছৎ শক্রসংসদম্॥
তং বনে বিজনে গর্ভং সিংহব্যাঘ্র সমাকুলে।
দৃষ্ট্বা শয়ানং শকুনাঃ সমন্তাৎ পর্য্যবারয়ন্॥
নেমাং হিংস্রবনে বালাং ক্রব্যাদা মাংসগৃদ্ধিনঃ।
পর্য্যরক্ষন্ত তাং তত্র শকুন্তা মেনকাত্মজাম্॥
উপস্প্রষ্টুং গতশ্চাহমপশ্যং শয়িতামিমাম্।
নির্জনে বিপিনে রম্যে শকুন্তৈঃ পরিবারিতাম্॥
আনয়িত্বা ততশ্চৈনাং দুহিতৃত্বে ন্যবেশয়ম্।
শরীরকৃৎ প্রাণদাতা যস্য চান্নানি ভুঞ্জতে।
ক্রমেণৈতে ত্রয়োঽপ্যুক্তাঃ পিতরো ধর্ম্মশাসনে॥
নির্জনেতু বনে যস্মাৎ শকুন্তৈঃ পরিবারিতা।
শকুন্তলেতি নামাস্যাঃ কৃতং চাপি ততো ময়া॥
এবং দুহিতরং বিদ্ধি মম বিপ্র শকুন্তলাম্।
শকুন্তলা চ পিতরং মন্যতে মামনিন্দিতা॥

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occur in the original. The excellent story of Sribatsa, for instance, which Krishna narrates to Yudhishthira in

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শকুন্তলা উবাচ।
এতদাচষ্ট পৃষ্টঃ সন্মমজন্ম মহর্ষয়ে।
সুতাং কণ্বস্য মামেবং বিদ্ধি ত্বং মনুজাধিপ ॥
কণ্বং হি পিতরং মন্যে পিতরং স্বং অজানতী।
ইতি তে কথিতং রাজন্ যথা বৃত্তং শ্রুতং ময়া ॥

শকুন্তলার জন্মকথা।

ইন্দ্র আজ্ঞা কৈল সঙ্গে যাহ দুইজন।
দেবরাজ আজ্ঞা পাইয়া চলিল তখন ॥
হেনমতে সবে গেল মুনির গোচর।
মুনি দেখি মেনকার কাঁপিল অন্তর ॥
অতিশয় সুবেশা হইয়া বিদ্যাধরী।
মুনির নিকটে ক্রীড়া করে মায়া করি ॥
হেনকালে বায়ু বহে অতি খরতর।
উড়াইয়া বস্ত্র তার ফেলিল অন্তর ॥
আস্তে ব্যস্তে মেনকা উঠিয়া বস্ত্র ধরে।
বিবিধ প্রকারে পবনেরে নিন্দা করে ॥
এ সকল কৌতুক দেখিল মুনিবর।
শরীরেতে ভেদিল কামের পঞ্চশর ॥
মেনকা ধরিয়া মুনি নিল নিজ দেশ।
কামে মত্ত নৃত্য করে শৃঙ্গার বিশেষ ॥
হেনমতে বহু দিন গেল ক্রীড়া রসে।
তপ জপ সকল ত্যজিল কামবশে ॥
এক দিন সন্ধ্যাকালে বিশ্বামিত্র মুনি।
সন্ধ্যা হেতু বলে রেগে জল দেহ আনি ॥
শুনিয়া মেনকা হাসি বলিল বচন।
এত দিনে ভাল সন্ধ্যা হইল স্মরণ ॥

an early part of *Vana Parva* in the Bengali translation, does not occur in the corresponding portion of the original, as published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Such is the method in which Kasiram Das has performed the great task which he imposed upon himself. The mere mechanical work of translating and condensing a great Sanscrit epic into over thirty-six thousand Bengali couplets is a tremendous task. If we suppose that Kasiram composed fifteen couplets every day, and that he worked twenty days in every month, he must have laboured ten years of his life to bring this great work to completion.

And the merits of the translation are not of a mean

এত শুনি মুনি হৈল কুপিত অন্তর।
দেখিয়া মেনকা ভয়ে পলায় সত্বর॥
হইয়াছিল সেই গর্ভ মুনির ঔরসে।
অরণ্যে প্রসব করি গেল নিজ দেশে॥
মুনি তপ নষ্ট করে গেল নিজ স্থানে।
আমারে ফেলিয়া গেল বিজন কাননে॥
সিংহ ব্যাঘ্র পশুগণ হিংসা নাহি করে।
পশুগণ বেড়িয়া যে রহিল আমারে॥
তপস্যা করিতে গেল কণ্ব সেই বনে।
অনাথা দেখিয়া তাঁর দয়া হৈল মনে॥
গৃহে আনি পালন করিল মুনিবর।
তেঁই আমি তাঁর কন্যা শুন দণ্ডধর॥
শকুনে বেড়িয়াছিল নিকুঞ্জ কাননে।
শকুন্তলা নাম মুখে রাখে তেকারণে॥
মম জন্মকথা এক মুনি জিজ্ঞাসিল।
কহিলেন কণ্ব তাঁরে তাহে জানা গেল॥
আদিপর্ব্বে দিব্য শকুন্তলা উপাখ্যান।
কাশীরাম দাস কহে শুনে পুণ্যবান॥

order. The reader must not look for the heroic spirit and the epic grandeur of the original in the Bengali version ; but in simplicity, sweetness and fluency, in a lucid flow of narration and an inexhaustible flow of verse, Kasiram Das remains unsurpassed and uneqalled in Bengali literature.

And if success be a proof of true merit, Kasiram's merit is beyond praise. No work in Bengali, scarcely even the Ramayana of Krittibas, is more extensively read and more deeply honoured by the people of Bengal, specially of the upper classes. The endless traditions and tales of the past times have a charm and an attraction, the morals inculcated and the incidents narrated never fail to please, and the translator's dignified, but simple and graceful verse never tires. Mothers know no better theme for imparting moral instruction to their daughters, wives know no better work for whiling away an idle hour, and elderly men know no richer store from which to narrate stories to groups of little children night after night. Thus the tales of the *Mahabharata* have been handed down from generation to generation with never failing interest, and where is the Bengali who has not in his boyish days passed many a long winter evening over these moral tales which can never, never be other than interesting and instructive?

CHAPTER V.

KRITTIBAS AND HIS RAMAYANA.

Fifteenth Century.

THERE are reasons to believe that Kasiram Das translated the *Mahabharata* in the fifteenth century. Krittibas's date is very uncertain ; but it is probable that he produced his Bengali version of the *Ramayana* probably about the close of the same century.

Of the life of Krittibas we know as little as we know of Kasiram Das, except that he was a Brahman by caste, and was born at Fulia, near Santipur, in the District of Nadiya. The two great pioneers of Bengali poetry lived in the opposite shores of the sacred Bhagirathi.

The task which Krittibas set before himself was less arduous than what his predecessor Kasiram had performed. The *Ramayana* in the original Sanscrit is not encyclopædic in its character ; its main story about the life and adventures of Rama is not overgrown with mythology, cosmogony and theogony ; its episodes are rare and restricted to the early portion of the work ; and its leading narrative is seldom interrupted. The *Ramayana* in fact is mainly the work of a single poet,*

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* It cannot be denied that it has undergone alterations through succeeding centuries, but in spite of them the epic poem continues to be one connected story, mainly the creation of one mind. A learned writer in the Westminster Review writes:—"The poem has evidently undergone considerable alteration since the time of its first composition, but still, underneath all the subsequent additions, the original

working out a single connected story; whereas the *Mahabharata* is a creation of many centuries, and a storehouse of endless stories. The *Ramayana* contains professedly twenty-four thousand couplets or epic verses; the *Mahabharata* contains professedly eighty-five thousand. The translator of the *Ramayana* had therefore a lighter task to perform than the translator of the *Mahabharata*.

In undertaking this task, Krittibas, like his great predecessor Kasiram Das, wisely determined to condense the original. We do not exactly know the length of

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elements are preserved, and careful criticism might perhaps separate the interpolations, and present the more genuine parts as a whole by themselves. The task however, would be difficult, and perhaps as impracticable as it has proved in the Homeric poems. For many ages it is certain that the work existed only by oral tradition, and each rhapsodist added or altered at his pleasure, or to suit the taste or vanity of the princely family whom he served. The measure of the poem, moreover, is of a somewhat fatal facility, and many rhapsodists would naturally be ambitious of mingling their own songs with those of their bards, and the habit of repetition would at once supply them with a vocabulary of epic phrases to suit their purpose. Whole chapters thus betray their origin by their barrenness of thought and laborious mimicry of the epic spirit, which in the case of the old poets had spontaneously burst out of the heart's fulness like the free song of a child. But when the Indian Pisistratus arose who collected these separate songs and reduced them to their present shape, the genuine and spurious were alike included, and no Hindu critic ever appears to have attempted to discriminate between them." *Westminster Review*, Vol. L.

An edition of the Sanscrit *Ramayana* (Bengal Recension) with an Italian translation was prepared by Gorresio, and published at the expense of the late king of Sardinia. A French translation has been given to the world by the indefatiguable Hippolyte Fanche, and for a very meritorious metrical translation into English we are indebted to Ralph Griffith. Pandit Hem Chandra Vidyaratna has conferred a lasting obligation on the people of Bengal by publishing an edition of the Sanscrit work (North-west Recension) with an excellent translation in prose; and the late poet Raj Krishna Rai has given us a faithful and commendable translation of the great work in Bengali verse.

Krittibas's version, for, as we will state hereafter, that version has been considerably altered and added to by mischievous editors in recent times. An edition of the work, printed in 1803 in the Serampur Mission Press, has however been reprinted; and from this edition we find that the twenty-four thousand couplets of the original work have been condensed into about sixteen thousand Bengali couplets.

But Krittibas has gone farther than this. A comparison of his *Ramayana* with the original shews that his version is no translation at all, but merely a new narration of the story of the ancient epic in his own way. There is considerable divergence in the arrangement of the matter; much of the contents in the original has been omitted, and many new incidents and stories have been introduced. And even when we compare the accounts of the same incidents in the two works, we find them so dissimilar that the Bengali work cannot be called a condensed translation of the Sanscrit work.

One instance will illustrate this. The breaking of Janaka's bow by Rama, and the nuptials of Rama and his brothers, and the defeat of Parasurama, have been described in the last eleven sections of the First Book of the Sanscrit *Ramayana*, *viz.* sections LXVII to LXXVII, comprising 305 couplets. These subjects has been reproduced in Krittibas's work (reprint of edition of 1803) in one long section of 365 couplets, but it is not possible to call this section a translation, in any sense, of the eleven sections of the Sanscrit work. The story has

been differently told in the two works; and Krittibas narrates the events entirely in his own way, without any reference whatever to the Sanscrit work.*

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* We quote the account of Rama's marriage from the two works. The Bengali poet describes a Bengali marriage ceremony of the present day!

বালকাণ্ড। ৭৩ সর্গ।

ততঃ সীতাং সমানীয় সর্ব্বাভরণভূষিতাম্।
সমক্ষমগ্নেঃ সংস্থাপ্য রাঘবাভিমুখে তদা।
অব্রবীজ্জনকো রাজা কৌশল্যানন্দবর্দ্ধনম্।
ইয়ং সীতা মমসুতা সহধর্ম্মচরী তব॥
প্রতীচ্ছ চৈনাং ভদ্রং তে পাণিং গৃহ্নীষ্ব পাণিনা।
পতিব্রতা মহাভাগা ছায়েবানুগতা সদা॥
ইত্যুক্ত্বা প্রাক্ষিপদ্ রাজা মন্ত্রপূতং জলং তদা।
সাধু সাধ্বিতি দেবানামৃষীণাং বদতাং তদা।
দেবদুন্দুভিনির্ঘোষঃ পুষ্পবর্ষো মহানভূৎ॥
এবং দত্ত্বা সুতাং সীতাং মন্ত্রোদকপুরস্কৃতাম্।
অব্রবীজ্জনকো রাজা হর্ষেণাভিপরিপ্লুতঃ॥
লক্ষ্মণাগচ্ছ ভদ্রং তে উর্ম্মিলামুদ্যতাং ময়া।
প্রতীচ্ছ পাণিংগৃহ্নীষ্ব মাভূৎ কালস্য পর্য্যয়ঃ॥
তমেবমুক্ত্বা জনকো ভরতঞ্চাভ্যভাষত।
গৃহাণ পাণিং মাণ্ডব্যাঃ পাণিনা রঘুনন্দন॥
শত্রুঘ্নঞ্চাপি ধর্ম্মাত্মা অব্রবীন্ মিথিলেশ্বরঃ।
শ্রুতকীর্ত্তে মহাবাহো! পাণিং গৃহ্নীষ্ব পাণিনা॥
সর্ব্বে ভবন্তঃ সৌম্যাশ্চ সর্ব্বে সুচরিতব্রতাঃ।
পত্নীভিঃ সন্তু কাকুৎস্থা মাভূৎ কালস্য পর্য্যয়ঃ॥
জনকস্য বচঃ শ্রুত্বা পাণীন্ পাণিভিরস্পৃশন্।
চত্বারস্তে চতসৃণাং বসিষ্ঠস্য মতে স্থিতাঃ॥
অগ্নিং প্রদক্ষিণং কৃত্বা বেদিং রাজানমেবচ।
ঋষীংশ্চাপি মহাত্মানঃ সহভার্য্যা রঘূদ্বহাঃ।
যথোক্তেন ততশ্চক্রুর্বিবাহং বিধিপূর্ব্বকম্॥

The Sixth Book of the epic describes the war between Rama and Ravana, which is the crowning incident of

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পুষ্পবৃষ্টির্মহত্যাসীদন্তরীক্ষাৎ সুভাস্বরা।
দিব্যদুন্দুভিনির্ঘোষৈর্গীতবাদিত্রনিস্বনৈঃ ॥
ননৃতুশ্চাপ্সরঃ সঙ্ঘা গন্ধর্ব্বাশ্চ জগুঃ কলম্।
বিবাহে রঘুমুখ্যানাং তদদ্ভুতমদৃশ্যত ॥
ঈদৃশে বর্ত্তমানেতু তূর্যোদ্ঘুষ্টনিনাদিতে।
ত্রিরগ্নিং তে পরিক্রম্য উহুর্ভার্য্যা মহৌজসঃ ॥
অথোপকার্য্যং জগ্মুস্তে সভার্য্যা রঘুনন্দনাঃ।
রাজাপ্যনুযযৌ পশ্যন্ সর্ষিসঙ্ঘঃ সবান্ধবঃ ॥

জানকীর বিবাহ কথা।

গলায় বস্ত্র দিয়া বলে জনক রাজন।
তোমার পুত্রে কন্যা দিয়া লইলাম শরণ ॥
দশরথ রাজা বলে জনক রাজারে।
শরণ লইলাম দিয়া চারিটী কোঙরে ॥
দুই রাজা উঠি তবে কৈল সম্ভাষণ।
কন্যা আন আন বলে যত বন্ধুগণ ॥
নানা বেশ ভূষা করেন যত সখীগণে।
বেশ করিল লক্ষ্মী মোহিতে নারায়ণে ॥
মাথায় কেহ কেহ দেয় আমলকী।
তোলা জলে স্নান এবে করে চন্দ্রমুখী ॥
টিবিনিতে কেশের করে জলের মার্জ্জন।
অঙ্গে অঙ্গে অভরণ দিতেছে তৎক্ষণ ॥
কপালে তুলিয়া দিল নির্ম্মল সিন্দুর।
বালসূর্য্য সমতেজ দেখি যে প্রচুর ॥
নাকেতে বেশর দিল মুকুতাহিল্লোলে।
পাটের পাছড়া দিল সকল শরীরে ॥
চঞ্চল নয়ন মেলি কজ্জলের রেখা।
কামের কামান যেন গুণ পলিতেকা ॥

the story; and in describing this war Krittibas has scarcely followed the story of the Sanscrit work. The first forty sections of this Book in the original Sanscrit,

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গলায় তুলিয়া দিল হার ঝিলিমিলি।
বুকেতে তুলিয়া দিল সোণার কাঁচলি॥
উপর হাতেতে তুলি দিল সোণার তাড়।
অঙ্গে অভরণ দিয়া ভূষিল অপার॥
দুই বাহু শঙ্খে পরেন অতি বিলক্ষণ।
শঙ্খের উপর বাজে সোণার কঙ্কন॥
বস্ত্র যে পরিল সবে সুন্দর প্রচুর।
দুই পায়ে তুলি দিল বাজন নুপুর॥
সুবর্ণ আসনে বসিলেন রূপবতী।
চারি দিকে জ্বালি দিল সোহাগের বাতি॥
চারি ভগ্নীতে বেশ করিল বিলক্ষণ।
শুভক্ষণে মণ্ডপে গিয়া দিল দরশন॥
অন্তঃপট নাই বরের মুখে স্থান।
রামের চরণে গিয়া করিল প্রণাম॥
অঞ্জলি পুষ্প দিয়া নমস্কার করে।
সপ্ত প্রদক্ষিণ কৈল রামের পদতলে॥
অন্তঃপট ঘুচাইল যত বন্ধুজন।
লক্ষ্মী নারায়ণ হৈল শুভ দরশন॥
সীতা লইয়া সবে লৈয়া যায় পানি।
লক্ষ্মী নারায়ণ দোঁহ হৈয়াছে মেলানি॥
জলধারা দিয়া কন্যা বর লৈল ঘরে।
শোয়াইল লৈয়া লক্ষ্মী অন্ধকার ঘরে॥
বরকে আনিতে আজ্ঞা করে সখীগণ।
ষষ্ঠীর পূজা করুন রাম নারায়ণ॥
হাতে ধরি আনাইল রাম নারায়ণে।
সীতার হাতে ধরি তোল বলে বন্ধুজনে॥
মনেতে ভাবিলেন তখন সীতাঠাকুরাণী।
পায়ে হাত দেন পাছে রাম গুণমণি॥

comprising about a thousand couplets, have been omitted by Krittibas, and he substitutes a small part of this story in his first five sections. The war commences with the sending of Angada as an envoy to Ravana, which is described in Section XLI of the Sanscrit work, and in Section VI. of Krittibas.

The incidents of the war then follow generally in the same order as in Sanscrit. But Krittibas's account of the battles is his own, and he has introduced some new incidents and new warriors of which there is no mention in the Sanscrit. The account of Mahi-Ravana and Ahi-Ravana and the childish episode of Hanuman carrying the solar orb under his arm find no mention in the Sanskrit epic.

It will thus appear that Krittibas's work is not a translation of the Sanscrit work. A class of reciters called

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বাম হাতের শঙ্খ করেন ঝনঝনি।
হাতেতে ধরিয়া তোলেন রাম রঘুমণি॥
স্ত্রীলোকেরা পরিহাস করে সেই ঠাঁয়ে।
কেহ বলে হাতে ধরে কেহ বলে পায়ে॥
পূর্ব্বাপর বর কন্যা আইল দুইজনে।
কন্যা দান করে রাজা বিবিধ বিধানে॥
কন্যা দান করে রাজা বিবিধ প্রকারে।
পঞ্চ হরিতকী দিয়া পরিহার করে॥
দাস দাসী অনেক রাজা দিল নৃপবরে।
জলধারা দিয়া কন্যা বর লইল ঘরে॥
রাজা রাণী গিয়া ঘরে করিল রন্ধন।
কন্যা বর দুইজনে করিল ভোজন॥
বাসর ঘর সাজাইল যত সখীগণ।
রাম সীতা বাসর ঘরে বঞ্চিল দুইজন॥

Kathakas have flourished in this country from olden times; they recite sacred legends before large audiences; they amuse and entertain their hearers by their wit, or move them to tears by their eloquence; and they thus teach the unlettered public in the traditions of the past, and preserve from age to age the literary heritage of the nation. The *Ramayana* is a fit subject for *Kathakas*; and the recitation lasts for a month or more, the speaker taking up the story every day from the point where he left it on the preceding day. It is supposed with reason that Krittibas learnt the story of the *Ramayana* from *Kathakas*, and that without attempting to translate the Sanscrit epic he has given his version of the story as he heard it. The poet has himself told us in several places in his work that he has composed it *as he heard it recited.*

But if Krittibas fails us as a translator, as a poet and composer he rises in our estimation. His narration is fluent and easy and often sparkles with the richest humour. Kasiram Das is a pious and learned student who has endeavoured to give his countrymen a condensed translation of the Sanscrit *Mahabharata*; Krittibas is a sprightly story-teller who tells the story of the *Ramayana* with his own native wit. Kasiram Das is anxious to teach his countrymen in the sacred traditions, the undying legends, and the didactic narrations, which compose the bulk of the *Mahabharata.* Krittibas delights in depicting in vivid colours the deeds of Hanuman, the fierce rage of the Rakshasas, the marvellous prowess of the god-like Rama. Kasiram

Das approaches his subject with reverence, and writes in a chaste and dignified though simple style; Krittibas delights in the somewhat primitive battles between monkeys and giants, colours his description with his wit, and writes in the style of ordinary villagers. Kasiram Das's work is the favourite study of pious Hindu ladies and of religious and elderly men of the upper classes; Krittibas appeals more effectively to the million. The village *Mudi* (confectioner) reads his *Ramayana*, when waiting for his customers, and the village *Kalu* (oil-manufacturer) chants the story of Rama and Sita, as his bullock turns his primitive oil-mill with a slow creaking sound. To the upper ten-thousand, Kasiram Das's work is a repository of all the sacred traditions and moral lessons of the Hindus; to the class of vendors, shopkeepers and the like, as well as to the upper classes, Krittibas's work is a joy which endureth for work. For the millions of Bengal, the two works have been a means of moral education the value of which cannot be over-estimated.

The simplicity of Krittibas's style and the great circulation of his work among the lower as well as upper classes has led to the frequent tampering of his text by successive editors, until the editions now sold in the Bazars have ceased to be Krittibas's work. We have made our extracts from a reprint of the edition of 1803, as it is less corrupt than more recent editions; but even that edition is not absolutely correct. Pandit Ramgati Nyayaratna has given us a passage from a manuscript of Krittibas's work written in 1099 of the Bengali Era,

corresponding to 1693 of the Christian Era, and therefore two centuries old. We quote a passage below from this edition of 1693, as well as the corresponding passage from the edition of 1803, and from an ordinary Bazar edition of 1893.*

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* তারা বলে রাম তুমি জন্মিলা উত্তম কুলে।
আমার পতি কাটিলা তুমি পাইয়া কোন ছলে॥
দেখা দেখি যুঝিতে যদি বুঝিতে প্রতাপ।
আদেখা মারিলে প্রভু বড় পাইনু তাপ॥
প্রভু মোর শাপ না দিলেন করুণ হৃদয়।
মুঞি শাপ দিব যেন হয় ত নিশ্চয়॥
সীতা উদ্ধারিবে তুমি আপন বিক্রমে।
সীতা ঘরে আসিবেন অনেক পরিশ্রমে॥
সীতা লইয়া ঘর করিবে হেন মনে আশ।
কত দিন রহি সীতা ছাড়িবে তোমার পাশ॥
তুমি যেমন কান্দাইলে বানরের নারী।
তোমা কাঁদাইয়া সীতা যাবেন পাতাল পুরী।

Edition of 1693.

তারা বলে ধার্ম্মিক তুমি জন্ম উত্তম কুলে।
আমার স্বামীকে মার পাইয়া কোন ছলে॥
দেখা দেখি মারিতে যদি দেখিতে প্রতাপ।
অদেখা ঘায় মারিলে প্রভু পাইলাম তাপ॥
প্রভু শাপ নাহি দিলেন করুণ হৃদয়।
আমি শাপ দিব তোমা ফলিবে নিশ্চয়॥
সীতা উদ্ধারিবে রাম আপন বিক্রমে।
সীতারে আনিবে তুমি অনেক পরিশ্রমে॥
সীতা লইয়া ঘর করিবে বড় মনে আশ।
কতক দিন থাকি সীতা ছাড়িবে তোমা পাশ॥
তুমি যেমন কান্দাইলে কিষ্কিন্ধ্যা নগরী।
তোমারে কান্দাইয়া সীতা যাবে স্বর্গপুরী॥

Edition of 1803 (Reprint).

A comparison of the three passages quoted below will indicate the nature of the alterations which Krittibas's text has undergone within the last two hundred years. We may assume that the text of 1693 was what Krittibas wrote, as there was little of mischievous editorial activity before that date, and printing was unknown in Bengal. The alterations made between 1693 and 1803 are of a verbal nature, and however much they may be regretted, they are slight in comparison with what followed. In the absence of any more correct edition, we may accept the edition of 1803 as Krittibas's work for the purposes

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তারা বলে রাম তব জন্ম রঘুকুলে ।
আমার স্বামীকে কেন বিনাশিলে ছলে ॥
সম্মুখে মারিতে যদি দেখিতে প্রতাপ ।
লুকাইয়া মারিলে পাইলাম বড় তাপ ॥
শ্রীরাম তোমারে সবে বলে দয়াবান ।
ভাল দেখাইলে আজি তাহার প্রমাণ ॥
একেবারে আমার করিতে সর্ব্বনাশ ।
সুগ্রীবের প্রতি দয়া করিলে প্রকাশ ॥
বিচ্ছেদ যাতনা যত জানহ আপনি ।
তবে কেন আমারে হে দিলে রঘুমণি ॥
প্রভু শাপ না দিলেন সদয় হৃদয় ।
আমি শাপ দিব তাহা ফলিবে নিশ্চয় ॥
সীতা উদ্ধারিবে রাম আপন বিক্রমে ।
সীতারে আনিবে ঘরে বহু পরিশ্রমে ॥
কিন্তু সীতা না রহিবে সদা তব পাশ ।
কিছু দিন থাকিয়া করিবে স্বর্গবাস ॥
কান্দাইলা যেইরূপ কিষ্কিন্ধ্যা নগরী ।
কান্দাইয়া তোমারে যাইবে স্বর্গপুরী ॥

Calcutta Edition of 1893.

of criticism, and we thank the Gupta Press for giving us a reprint of this first printed edition of the work. Since 1803, however, printed editions of the work have multiplied, and the mischievous activity of editors has increased. The late Pandit Jai Gopal of the Sanscrit College is reputed to have recast the older editions and to have produced the modern ones. Comparing the text of 1803 with that of 1893 we find that the somewhat loose metre of Krittibas has been rectified, the number of syllables has been adjusted, the expressive but homely words of the poet have been replaced by more refined expressions, some lines have been added and thrown in here and there, and the homely beauty of Krittibas's poetry has been lost. To our ear, Krittibas's irregular verse and loose metre have more true music and more genial force in them than the corrected metre, the sanscritized expressions, and the more prolonged descriptions in the later editions of his work.

The Gupta Press has performed a patriotic work by reprinting the edition of 1803. But the task of producing an absolutely correct text of the work, from the old manuscripts still available, has yet to be done. The *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* (Academy of Bengali Literature) has undertaken the task; and it will earn the gratitude of our countrymen by giving them a correct text of the immortal work of one of the earliest and greatest poets of Bengal.

Kasiram Das's work is perhaps less popular than that of Krittibas, and has been tampered with to a less extent. The great bulk of the work also, made further additions

inadvisable even to modern editors, and the more dignified nature of the style and the subject rendered such additions by no means an easy. But nevertheless verbal alterations have been made, as can be found out by comparison of a modern copy with an old manuscript. And the *Parishad* will perform a patriotic task by editing a correct edition of this work also.

The Bengali *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are the first great literary works in the Bengali language; they are the foundations on which Bengali literature is built. And the people of modern Bengal will not rest content till they get back these great works in their integrity.

CHAPTER VI.

Chaitanya and his Religious Reform.

Sixteenth century.

We have seen in the last two chapters that literary activity began in Bengal in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The sixteenth century witnessed a great religious reform and a marked progress in philosophy and culture. Indeed similar movements were observable in every province of India in this age of renaissance and reform, which corresponds curiously with the age of renaissance and reform in Europe. It was in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that Kabir preached religious reform in southern and northern India, that Chaitanya preached and worked in Bengal, and the great Nanak founded a reformed religion in the Punjab. It was in this age that Kasiram and Krittibas translated the ancient epics into Bengali, and they were immediately followed by the great Sridhar who translated the epics into Mahrati, and by the equally great Tulasi Das who rendered the Ramayana into Hindi. It was in this age or shortly after, that Mukundaram in Bengal, and Tukaram in Bombay, distinguished themselves by original compositions which are still dear to their countrymen. And it was in this age also that

Raghunandan compiled a religious code for the Hindus of Bengal, and Raghunath started the school of philosophy which still attracts scores of students from all parts of India to the sacred precincts of Nadiya. The movements of the human mind are more widespread and far-reaching than historians generally suspect, and there are special eras of culture when the human mind all over the civilized world seems to expand under a vivifying influence, and moves onwards with a fresh vigour towards higher results. Such an era was the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which produced men like Copernicus, Columbas and Luther in Europe; and such another era began in the eighteenth century which witnessed the Independence of America and the French Revolution. Chaitanya was the most remarkable product of the sixteenth century enlightenment in Bengal, and to a narration of his life and work we now address ourselves. His biographers, Krishna Das, Vrindavan Das and Lochan Das, have left us copious accounts of the life and work of their greater master, and though, as staunch Vaishnavas, they believed Chaitanya to be an incarnation of Krishna and have ascribed to him numberless miracles, yet it is not a difficult or a profitless task to glean from their accounts the real facts connected with the life of the great reformer of the sixteenth century.

About the middle of the 15th century, Upendra Misra, a wealthy and learned Vaishnava, lived in Sylhet. He had seven sons of whom Jagannath Misra migrated to the town of Nabadwip or Nadiya. He had eight

daughters by his wife Sachi, but none of them lived long. At last Sachi bore him two sons; the elder was named Viswarup, and the younger was the future reformer of Bengal.

He was born in Nabadwip in the year 1485 A. D., that is about the time when the great Luther was born in Europe. The women of the family and the neighbourhood came to see and bless the infant, and named it Nimai, and notwithstanding that the learned men of the locality gave the child the more pompous name of Viswambhar, Nimai the child was called by all who knew him. Later in life he was called Gauranga, or the fair-complexioned, Krishna Chaitanya, or the incarnation of Krishna, and sometimes Gaur Hari, or the fair Krishna,—Chaitanya being of a very fair complexion, while Krishna, whose incarnation he was supposed to be, was dark. Chaitanya is said to have been born in the evening when there was an eclipse of the moon, and his poetic biographer explains the circumstances by arguing that there was no need for a spotted moon in the sky, when an unspotted moon had appeared on earth!

Various are the anecdotes recounted of the infancy and boyhood of Chaitanya, all tending to shew that he was an incarnate deity. While yet an infant "puking and mewling in its mother's arm," Chaitanya seems to have been very troublesome, and to have never ceased crying, till the word *Hari* was shouted by the people around him, thus causing the name of Krishna to be preached and proclaimed before the infant had yet learnt to speak. On one occasion the little child was licking an

earthen toy, when Sachi came in, and reproved him for mistaking earth for food. "And what is food but earth and dust?" argued the lisping boy, "and what is our body but dust?" A restless and mischievous boy as he was, he teased the girls of the neighbourhood and quarrelled with other boys. When the girls came to the river-side with rice and other things to worship images, the little truant appropriated the food to his own use, and bade them worship him, for *he* was the great Master of the gods and goddesses they had come to worship. Flying from his enraged mother the little boy one day hid himself in an unclean vessel. This provoked Sachi who bade him instantly to go and bathe in the Ganga (Hugli River) to purify himself. The young sage however calmly replied that uncleanliness dwelt not in outward things but in the mind. It may be easily imagined these and other anecdotes of a similar nature have been invented by the followers of Chaitanya to prove the godhead of their great master.

Chaitanya commenced his studies with Ganga Das Pandit and shewed great intelligence and aptitude for learning. It was about this time that the parents of Chaitanya began to think of a suitable match for his elder brother Viswarup, who was then in his early youth. Viswarup however was otherwise inclined; and filled with religious fervour, he left his home and turned a Sanyasi. The disconsolate mother had a yet severer trial awaiting her. It was not long after, that Jagannath Misra paid the debt of nature, and Nimai therefore was

the sole surviving stay and consolation of the bereaved widow.

In his earlier days, Chaitanya had made the acquaintance of a girl named Lakshmi, daughter of Ballabhacharja, when she had come to the river-side to worship. The young student now thought of marriage, and his widowed mother celebrated his marriage with Lakshmi with feelings of mingled joy and sorrow.

As Chaitanya advanced in years, he began to gather round him a large number of pupils, and his reputation as a scholar became great. The way in which philosophy, literature and religion have always been cultivated among the Hindus up to the time of the English conquest, and even since then, is well known. There were no regular academies, schools or colleges, as in Europe. The sages of ancient India, however, set themselves up as instructors, and gathered round them pupils varying in number according to their reputation for learning. Such pupils lived with their tutor in his house as members of the same family, looked on him as their father, and on his wife as their mother. Whatever might be their rank or status in society, they were all equal in his eyes, served him with equal fidelity during the period of their education, and vied with each other in obedience and respect towards him. The tutor received no fees, but the pupils looked to his cattle, milked his cows, begged food for his support, procured for him wood from the forest and water from the well, served him as his menial servants, and lived together in harmony and peace. When their education was completed, each

pupil was expected to make a handsome present to his tutor, and this,—often a considerable sum of money,—was all that the *guru* received for his pains. Each pupil would then return to his own rank and status in life, a few of the more clever and advanced setting themselves up as new tutors and gathering pupils around them. The ancient lore of India has been handed down from generation to generation in this simple arcadian style, and vestiges of such institutions are still to be found in Nadiya and many other places in India. Thus under the Hindu, the Muhammadan, and even the English rule, these quiet thinkers and professors have from century to century preserved and propounded the ancient learning of India, and often started new questions in philosophy or law, despising all exotic wisdom and foreign languages, be it the Persian, the Arabic, or the English, and forgetting, and forgotten by, a world of unquiet and aspiring statesmen, politicians and men of the world.

Chaitanya, then, set himself up as a tutor, gathered pupils around him, and his fame as a man of deep learning increased day by day. His reputation spread throughout and beyond the limits of Nadiya. He baffled those who came to beat him in learned controversies, and satisfied others who came in all humility to have their doubts explained. After winning the admiration of all people in his native place, he left his country and travelled into Eastern Bengal. Thither too his fame had spread, and numbers of people flocked around him to have the benefit

of his instructions. He reached the banks of the Padmavati and dwelt there for some months, instructing an ever increasing circle of friends. He then returned to his native place, but before he reached it his beloved wife had breathed her last.

Chaitanya continued to give instruction to his pupils at Nadiya ; he was now called Nimai Pandit or Viswambhar Pandit. He assembled his pupils early in the morning and taught them till about noon, after which he and his pupils went to the river-side together to bathe. Then they parted, and met again in the evening, and continued their literary labors till a late hour in the night.

The mother of Chaitanya became anxious to marry his son again, and the young Pandit was married to Vishnu Priya, the accomplished daughter of Sanatan whose learning had got for him the title of *Panditaraj*, or the prince of the learned. A pupil of Chaitanya, by name Buddhimanta, volunteered to pay the expenses of his tutor's marriage, and the ceremony was performed with great pomp. Soon after Chaitanya again left his native place and visited Gaya.

The visit to Gaya was the great turning point in the life of the reformer. Enthusiastic in his disposition, and attached to the faith of Krishna from his early youth, Chaitanya had, up to this time, lived and learned and taught much in the same way as other men did. But the sanctity of the place he visited, the instructions of Iswari Puri a devout Vaishnava, and the local religious associations of the place caused a thorough

change in the character of the ardent young man. He had gone to Gaya a noted scholar and a religious man,—he returned an enthusiastic reformer.

Now, for the first time, were seen those violent outward manifestations of faith and feeling which characterized the ardent worshippers of Krishna in those times. Fired with unwonted zeal, they were now and then overtaken by paroxysms of faith, and wept and laughed and danced like mad men. Horripilation, violent perspiration, and frequent fits of fainting marked these periods of religious ecstacy. The poor mother of Chaitanya trembled for her son, and marked with fear and concern the change in his demeanour, but it was beyond the power of domestic affection to make the reformer turn from the path he had chosen. It is not possible in the present age of reason to conceive the extent to which the mind can at times be subjected to the violent sway of religious feeling and fanaticism. Chaitanya was now a changed man ; he fired in his followers and pupils an ardent faith in Krishna ; he ignored all rites and ceremonies ; he proclaimed from house tops that the salvation of man depended solely on faith in Krishna. The town of Nabadwip suddenly rang with the loud *Sankirtan* of Krishna.

Day after day, Chaitanya and his followers assembled and proclaimed and preached the faith of Krishna. They met in the house of Sribas, where Nityananda, Adyaita, Sridhar, and a number of other devout followers anointed Chaitanya with water, sandal powder and flowers. Their number daily increased ; people of

all classes were struck with the zeal and piety of the new sect ; many joined it ; and people of all castes and denominations were welcomed to seek salvation through faith in Krishna.

In the meanwhile the rise of this sect raised violent opposition in many quarters. Hindus looked with distrust and fear on a religion which ignored all rites and distinctions of caste, while the Muhammadan Kazi of the town ordered all *Sankirtans* to be forthwith stopped. Chaitanya, however, boldly met the Kazi, and the result of the interview, we are assured, was that the Kazi himself pronounced the holy name of Krishna and was saved. Many miracles are ascribed to Chaitanya about this period ; but we pass them by.

Thus passed the first twenty-four years of the life of Chaitanya ; and now he felt within him a powerful call to proclaim the light that was in him through the length and breadth of India. It was the small still voice which he could not resist, it was the call of duty which could not be silenced by the entreaties of friends or the tears of a mother. In vain did Sachi attempt with many tears to dissuade her only friend on earth from leaving her a forlorn helpless widow ; in vain did even the devout followers of Chaitanya persuade him not to leave his native town. Chaitanya's heart was fixed and unmoved, and early in 1509, he became a Sanyasi and left his native town never to return again. During the remaining twenty-four years of his life he wandered as the apostle of Vaishnavism, and preached the faith of Krishna from the banks of the Cavery to those of the Jumna.

Chaitanya set out for Vrindavan on the banks of the Jumna, accompanied by Nityananda, Ratna and Mukunda, three of his followers. He crossed the Hugli, for Nabadwip was then on the east bank, and proclaimed the name of Krishna in every village through which he passed, to men, women and children. People were struck with his enthusiasm, and it is no wonder if many actually mistook the wild enthusiast for a deity. His follower Nityananda was one of those who would have liked to see his master always in his native town. It was not difficult to mislead Chaitanya from the right way to Vrindavan, and after three days' wanderings through several villages to the west of the Hugli, Nityananda brought back his master to the Hugli again. Chaitanya reproved his follower, but was obliged to cross the river and to rest for a few days in the town of Santipore. His follower Adyaita there received him with open arms and welcomed him to his house. News travelled to Nabadwip that the reformer had come back to Santipur, and all his friends and followers came to see him. Affecting indeed was the meeting of Chaitanya with his faithful followers whom he had left behind, but still more affecting was his meeting with his forlorn mother who came to Santipur to see his son once more. They insisted with many tears on his returning to Nabadwip, but Chaitanya had left his home as a Sanyasi and would not return. He consoled his mother however as best he could, assuring her that he would pass most of his time in Nilachala (Orissa), so that she would receive frequent news about him. To his followers he made the parting request that

they should proclaim the name and religion of Krishna in their homes as he was going to proclaim it all over India. They parted once more, and Chaitanya set out on his travels.

Chaitanya now went southwards with Nityananda and others, passed through Jajpur, Katak and Kamalpur, visited the shrines of Sakshi Gopal, Bhuvaneswar and Kapoteswar, and at last reached Jagannath. This last is a place dedicated to Krishna, and the deep veneration and ecstasy with which Chaitanya viewed this place may easily be conceived. There too he met Sarbabhauma, a learned and venerable man and a devout Vaishnava who received Chaitanya with open arms ; and many and long were the religious controversies which they held together. From Jagannath, Chaitanya resolved to travel southwards. Nityananda and others offered to accompany him, but he wished to go alone, and was at last persuaded to take one Krishna Das, a simple-minded Brahman, as his sole companion. Southwards, then, went Chaitanya with Krishna Das, proclaiming the name of Krishna wherever he went. People flocked round him and were struck with his sanctity and enthusiasm, and numbers became converts. They returned to their villages, and told the wonderful tale and converted others. Thus, says the biographer of Chaitanya, the name of Krishna deluged the land as by an inundation.

At Jiar, Chaitanya rested a few days in the house of Ramananda Rai, a venerable and learned man, whom he instructed in the truths of his religion and soon fired with faith in Krishna. Thence he passed through numer-

ous villages, everywhere making converts. Atheists, Philosophers of different schools, Buddhists, and Saivas, all yielded the palm to the new reformer, and many were the converts he made. At last he reached the banks of the Cavery and rested four months at Sriranga (Seringapatam). He visited the southern Mathura (Madura), and then Rameswar, Chaitanya also visited Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin) and the Malaya or the Nilgiri Hills. Thence he travelled northwards, crossed the Tapti and the Nurbudda, and visited Dandakaranya, Pampa, Panchabati and other places noted in the Ramayana. Near the sources of the Godaveri he was joined by his old friend Ramananda Rai who had come here to meet him. They travelled back to Orissa, and at Jagannath, Chaitanya was met by most of his friends. His vows forbade him to return to his native place, but Krishna Das the companion of all his travels was sent to Nabadwip with the joyful tidings of his return. It was with great joy that his followers came and met him once more in Nilachala.

Chaitanya and his followers remained at Jagannath during the Rath festival, and great were their rejoicings on the occasion. Prataparudra the king of Orissa expressed a desire to see the Vaishnava leader, but the Sanyasi's vow he had taken, forbade him to see a king. A sort of compromise was effected, the king's son visited the reformer, and Chaitanya blessed the father in the son, and they embraced his religion.

After a residence of a few months at Jagannath, Chaitanya resolved on visiting northern India. The

king was distressed at this news, and Sarbabhauma, Ramananda and Nityananda, all tried to dissuade him from the undertaking. Their persuation however was fruitless, and at the close of the rainy season Chaitanya left Jagannath. He went northwards through Bhubaneswar, Katak, Remuna and Panihati, and came once more to Santipur. Affecting indeed was his meeting with his mother who had come to Santipur from Nabadwip, and who embraced her son with tears of joy.

Chaitanya once more took leave of his friends, sent back his mother to Nabadwip, and left Santipur. Among his companions were the brothers Rup and Sanatan, ministers of the Muhammadan ruler of Behar. They were of royal blood, and of high rank and much wealth, but despised all these things for their love of the reformer. Chaitanya's fame had now spread on all sides, and vast numbers of people gathered round him on his way towards Vrindavan. This was an inconvenience to a traveller, and Sanatan rightly advised him to part with all his companions if he wanted to proceed on his journey. The year however was far advanced, the rainy season had already commenced, Chaitanya therefore was compelled to remain a few months in Nilachala, to the great joy of king Prataprudra. At the close of the rains, he set out for Vrindavan with Balabhadra Bhattacharja as his sole companion.

To avoid notice Chaitanya left the beaten path, and went through a forest. His poetic biographer waxes eloquent, and describes how in the presence of the great master the tiger embraced the deer and danced with

joy, and how the name of Krishna, chanted by Chaitanya, made the flowers of the forest blossom and the birds chirp with glee. He passed through Benares and Allahabad, proclaiming the name of Krishna and making numerous converts as he went along. Great indeed was his ecstacy when he at last gazed on the Jumna and visited Mathura and Vrindavan. His whole life had been spent in proclaiming the name of Krishna, and his fervour and his ardent love reached their climax when he witnessed the scenes of Krishna's boyhood and early youth. His paroxysms of feeling came over him thick and frequent, and his life was endangered by the repeated fits of fainting that he underwent. From these scenes Chaitanya returned to Allahabad by the river. Here he was met by the brothers Rup and Ballabh, who had sacrificed wealth, rank and royal favor, and become devout Vaishnavas. Their eldest brother Sanatan had in the meantime got into a scrape. He too had resigned his service, but the king would not let him go so easily. Incensed at the conduct of Rup and Ballabh, the king ordered Sanatan to be confined. Escaping after many difficulties, Sanatan at last joined Chaitanya at Benares. Both Rup and Sanatan were learned men and authors of note, as we shall see in a future chapter, and long and numerous were the religious dialogues between Chaitanya and Sanatan at Benares. Sanatan was then sent to join his brothers at Vrindavan to preach the name of Krishna, and Chaitanya once more returned to his loving friends at Nilachala.

The remaining years of his life were passed by Chaitanya in Nilachala in meditations and in preaching the name of Krishna. His devoted followers occasionally came to visit him, the brothers Rup, Sanatan and Ballabh came from Vrindavan and were received by Chaitanya with joy, but they were again sent back to Vrindavan. Raghunath Das was also sent to Vrindavan. Nityananda and others remained with Chaitanya in Nilachala.

A curious story is told of the death of Chaitanya. One evening, as he was wandering on the sea-beach with his friends, he was suddenly struck at the sight of the bright moon-beams glittering on the blue waves of the sea. In one of those paroxysms which were so frequent with him, he mistook the sea for the blue waves of the Jumma. He ran into the sea in ecstacy, and soon after became insensible. His friends missed him and searched for him every where, and soon after, a fisherman brought to his disconsolate followers the body of their beloved master which he had fished up from the sea. Chaitanya died in 1533 at the early age of 48.

Such was the life of the great apostle of Hindu monotheism in Bengal. Chaitanya did not found a new religion. His religion is only a reformed phase of the Hindu religion. It recognizes Krishna as the Supreme Deity, ignores the caste system, and even admits Muhammadans as proselytes. In the present day, however, all lay Vaishnavas have adopted Hinduism and recognize the caste system, and it is only among the mendicant Vaishnavas that the religion of Chaitanya is found to pre-

vail in its integrity. In this respect Vaishnavism resembles Buddhism which has its monks and its lay disciples; and indeed scholars are aware that Vaishnavism itself is a modern survival of Buddhism under a Hindu guise. Buddhism in an idolatrous form prevailed during many centuries after the Christian era in Orissa, and the worship of Buddha, recognized by Hindus as one of the incarnations of Vishnu, now survives in a Hindu guise in the worship of Jagannath.

CHAPTER VII.

The followers of Chaitanya.

Sixteenth century.

We have in the preceding chapter given a sketch of the life and work of Chaitanya. In the present chapter we shall very briefly review the work of some of the companions of the reformer,—the Apostles of Vaishnavism in Bengal.*

Among the followers of Chaitanya, Adyaita and Nityananda stand foremost. Indeed, the Vaishnavas of Bengal regard them as partial incarnations of Vishnu, as part and parcel of the spirit which had its full manifestation in Chaitanya.

In the preceding chapter we have had frequent occasion to notice the acts of these leaders, nor is there much to add. Adyaita was a wealthy and respected inhabitant of Santipur, and is said to have prophesied the birth of Chaitanya, and sent his wife to Nabadwip when the great reformer was born. After Chaitanya had left his home as a Sanyasi, never to return, the house of Adyaita at Santipur was more than once the meeting place where the Vaishnavas of Bengal flocked to see their master, returned from his travels. All through his life, Adyaita, though himself a wealthy man, held the poor

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* For much of the information contained in this chapter we are indebted to Ram Das Sen's paper on the works of the Vaishnava Leaders of Bengal.

wandering reformer in deep veneration. The descendants of Adyaita still live in Santipur, and are held by all Vaishnavas in the highest regard.

Nityananda was perhaps the most esteemed companion of Chaitanya. He was a wealthy inhabitant of Nabadwip, and is said to have been by no means indifferent to the good things of this life. Yet Chaitanya held him in high respect and bestowed on him the title of *Prabhu*. His descendants are yet living. The Goswamis of Khardaha are descended from him by the male line, and those of Balagor by the female line. Chaitanya, Adyaita and Nityananda are spoken of by the Vaishnavas of Bengal as the three *Prabhus*. They were all Brahmans by birth, and none of them seems to have written any books either in Sanskrit or in Bengali.

Next to these come the six great writers who are known as the Vaishnavacharjas of Bengal. They are Rup Goswami, Sanatan Goswami, Jiva Goswami, Gopal Bhatta, Raghunath Bhatta and Raghunath Das. It is much to be regretted that they have all written in Sanskrit,—the highest efforts of their genius appear feeble and common-place because they are misdirected. High indeed, in the rolls of the early Bengali authors, had the names of Rup and Sanatan stood, if they had written in their native tongue. As it is, their names are generally known only among Vaishnavas, and the proud position which they might have occupied is ceded to Mukunda Ram and other writers who composed in the language of the people. It is a lesson which has a special application in the present day.

We have already noticed the prominent facts in the lives of the brothers Rup and Sanatan in the preceding chapter. They were of royal blood, being descended from a prince of the Carnatic, and held high positions under the Muhammadan ruler of Behar. Fanatics and enthusiasts have always succeeded in gathering round them a number of ignorant people, but the reformer of the sixteenth century must have indeed had a strange power to induce men of wealth and influence to descend from their high position in society, to be his humble followers. Rup and Sanatan gave up their posts, sacrificed wealth, rank and royal favor, disregarded royal wrath, and braved persecution, in order to become humble Vaishnavas.

Rup Goswami has written several books. *Ujjvala Nilamani* is a book on Sanscrit rhetoric in prose and verse. Under the plea of describing the life and acts of Krishna, the writer discourses on love, piety and devotion. *Hansa Duta* describes the distress of Radha and the milk-maids of Gokula in the absence of Krishna. They at last send a goose as a messenger to Krishna, and hence the name of the book. *Uddhava Sandesa* describes the agony of Krishna in the absence of Radha, and the lover at last sends Uddhava as a messenger to the beloved, hence the name of the book. *Srirupa Chintamani* describes the beauty of Krishna, and *Mathura Mahatmya*, as the name implies, describes the glory of Mathura. Many other poems also were written by this voluminous versifier.

Sanatan Goswami has written very much less than

his brother. His *Gitavali* describes the Doljatra, Rasa, and other festivities held in honor of Krishna.

Jiva Goswami was the son of Ballabh, the brother of Rup and Sanatan. His great work is *Shat Sandarbha* which, as its name signifies, is divided into six parts, and describes religious and devotional feelings.

Gopal Bhatta was the son of Bankata Bhatta of the village Bhattamari. During his travels Chaitanya stopped for a period of four months in his house, and the religious fervour and instructions of the reformer left an impression on the mind of the young Bhatta. Soon after the departure of Chaitanya, Gopal left home and family and turned a wanderer like his master. He stopped for a time at Benares with a learned teacher, and turning a regular Sanyasi went to Vrindavan, where he joined Rup, Sanatan and other Vaishnava luminaries. He wrote several works, of which *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* is the best known. It treats of the duties of Vaishnavas.

Raghunath Das was a Kayastha by birth, and the son of a wealthy man. The *Bhaktamala* states that he left property worth nine lacs and a young wife of exceeding beauty and loveliness for his love of Chaitanya. He met the reformer at Jagannath, and Chaitanya held him in great esteem and love. Afterwards he went to Vrindavan and lived with the celebrated Vaishnavas of that place. Though a Kayastha by birth, he received from Chaitanya the title of Acharja, and lived with the five other Acharjas. These last were all Brahmans by birth, but neither Chaitanya nor his followers recognized

caste inequalities. His *Vilapakusumanjali Stotra* is the prayer of a devout Vaishnava perplexed with the troubles of this world, and his *Manosiksha* treats of the training of the mind to the love of Krishna.

Krishna Das and Vrindavan Das and Lochan Das, the biographers of Chaitanya, though not strictly speaking his companions, may come in for a notice here. They have written in Bengali, and their works are very popular with Vaishnavas.

Vrindavan Das was the son of Narayani who from her girlhood was devotedly attached to the faith of Chaitanya. Pandit Ramgati has erroneously supposed her to be the daughter of Srivas a follower of Chaitanya. The author himself informs us that his mother was the daughter of a brother of Srivas.* And it was in the house of Srivas that the little girl, then four years old, first saw the reformer, and ever after loved him and his religion. It would appear therefore, that Vrindavan Das wrote his book about the middle of the 16th century, and after the death of Chaitanya.

We confess we cannot discover much beauty or poetic excellence in his book *Chaitanya Bhagavat*, and if it is a popular book with Vaishnavas we can only ascribe the fact to its being the first book describing the life and acts of Chaitanya. Krishna Das is lavish in his praise of Vrindavan's work, and indeed compares Vrindavan to the great Vyasa of ancient India. But we confess we turn with a sort of relief from Vrindavan's affected

* Vide pp. 123 of *Chaitanya Bhagavat.*

style and dreary Sanscrit quotations to the simpler narrative of Krishna Das himself.

Krishna Das was born at Jhamatpur near Katwa in the district of Burdwan, and was a Vaidya by caste. He was a devout Vaishnava and travelled to Vrindavan, in which place he probably composed his *Chaitanya Charitamrita.* The date of the book is not known. Very probably it was written some twenty years after Vrindavan Das had written his book. It is, we think, in every respect superior to the work of Vrindavan Das; the style is simple, and the writer apparently writes with feeling. The description of the rejoicings in Nabadwip at the birth of Chaitanya, the account of Sachi's parting with her beloved son, and the description of the Rathajatra ceremony at Jagannath, are all instinct with feeling.

The third biography of Chaitanya is *Chaitanya Mangal* of Lochan Das. It is not considered a book of high authority by the Vaishnavas.

Other voluminous Vaishnava works like Narahari's *Bhaktiratnakar* and Madhava's *Bhagavatsara*, well-known works in their days, are now well nigh forgotten. Madhava is said to have also written a work on *Chandi* which has been replaced by the more meritorious work composed by Mukundaram.

CHAPTER VIII.

RAGHUNATH AND HIS SCHOOL OF LOGIC.

Sixteenth century.

HISTORY repeats itself. The human mind often moves forward in the same direction, and by the same path, when inspired with fresh vigour and fresh light. There can be little in common between the age of rationalism and reform in ancient India,—the sixth century before Christ, and the age of renaissance in modern India,—the sixteenth century after Christ. The Hindu nation was free and the Hindu mind was untrammelled in the ancient age; the nation was subject to a foreign rule and its energies and thoughts were cribbed and confined in the modern age. But nevertheless it is impossible not to recognize in the renaissance of the sixteenth century after Christ a pale reflection of the movement which was witnessed in the sixth century before Christ.

Buddhism had almost died out in Bengal, but it was Buddhist monastic institutions and Buddhist principles of human equality and brotherhood which were renovated in a Hindu guise in modern Vaishnavism. And Chaitanya therefore is the modern counterpart of Gautama Buddha. Ancient Hindu philosophy and logic were scarcely known in Bengal before the sixteenth century; it was in that *siecle* that the philosophical school

of Nabadwip was started, and Raghunath is the modern counterpart of Kapila. And lastly, Hindu orthodoxy was alarmed at the spread of heterodox and philosophical speculations in ancient India as in modern Bengal, sacred laws and rules of orthodox rites were carefully compiled and insisted upon, and Raghunandan of modern Bengal is the counterpart of Vasishtha and Gautama and other ancient compilers of sacred laws. We are afraid to proceed further with this parallel; it would be misleading to suggest a very close resemblance between India in the sixth century, B. C. and India in the sixteenth century A. D. All that we wish to indicate is that the Hindu mind in the modern age has, under the influence of new light and progress, travelled once more in the same direction, though with feeble effort, as it did in the days of its ancient vigour.

Mithila or North Behar was one of the most advanced kingdoms in India from the time of Janaka in the epic age, and took a prominent part in the progress of philosophy and thought which marked the seventh and sixth centuries before Christ. It is possible that Gautama the founder of logic flourished in Behar; it is certain that logical studies were kept up in the schools of Mithila by an uninterrupted succession of scholars and teachers. Pakshadhara Misra was the last of these eminent scholars, and had his crowded *tol* of logic in Mithila in the fifteenth century; and Vasudeb of Nabadwip was one of the scholars who learnt logic in his school.

Vasudeb returned to Nabadwip with the title of Sarbabhauma, and set himself up as a teacher, and the three great men whose deeds have shed a bright light on the sixteenth century,—Chaitanya, Raghunath and Raghunandan,—all received their instruction in their early days from this prince of teachers.

Raghunath was a poor orphan and was blind of one eye from his birth. In school he often puzzled the venerable Vasudeb by his questions, and his eager and inquisitive mind was not satisfied with the traditional solutions of difficult problems. It is said that young Chaitanya and young Raghunath were intimate friends, and that the doubts and anxious enquiries of Raghunath were often solved for him by the future reformer with his clear intellect and his strong natural good sense. Raghunath thanked his friend for such assistance, and hoped to pursue philosophical studies with him through life. But their paths lay in different directions; Chaitanya went in for religious reform, and Raghunath, at the early age of twenty, left his home and repaired to Mithila to complete his study of logic in that renowned "university-town."

Old Pakshadhara Misra was still alive, and welcomed his pupil's pupil to his school. In a short time however he perceived that the mind of the young man was cast in a different mould from that of ordinary students, and that traditional learning did not satisfy him. Many were the enquiries with which the young student puzzled his venerable teacher, and the fame of Raghunath spread far and wide.

It was necessary for a student on the completion of his education to signalize himself in a trial, and to win his title. Young Raghunath fearlessly entered into a discussion with his teacher, and did not hesitate to demolish his arguments. But it was not possible for the venerable Professor of logic to confess a defeat in the very place where generations of students had looked up to him as infallible. With a pardonable weakness, Pakshadhara concealed his defeat in a cloud of sophistry, and humiliated his ardent opponent with bitter taunts and ridicule. Young Raghunath left the school humiliated, and to all appearance beaten in the discussion.

A story is then told for the accuracy of which it is impossible to vouch, but which is worth repeating. Smarting under disgrace and undeserved humiliation, the young student is said to have sought the house of his teacher by night, on vengeful thoughts intent. The object of his ambition was lost, and his prospect in life was ruined; for it would be impossible to convince the Hindu world that the great Pakshadhara was wrong and the unknown young student was right. His apparent defeat and humiliation had ruined his prospects; he could win no title now and could open no school, no students would gather round him and no one would credit his acquirements and learning. A blow had been struck, such as only the heavy hand of a man, great in rank and reputation, can strike on an unknown but aspiring youth. The blow had fallen with fatal effect and it was impossible to recover from it; and the career for which young Raghunath had laboured for years, and which was

the dream of his ambition, was lost for ever. Raghunath was a ruined man, and Raghunath stole into his teacher's house,—a desperate man.

The light of the full-moon fell on Pakshadhara's house as the old professor and his wife sat on the roof. The gentle housewife was trying to please her husband, but something troubled him and preyed on him. He seldom replied to her and scarcely heard what she said. To all appearance he had demolished young Raghunath in the discussion held that day, but the good old teacher could not forgive himself the art he had practised, and he felt within himself that for once in his life he had been fairly beaten, though none knew it.

Pakshadhara woke from his reveries when his gentle wife spoke of the moon-beams and asked,—"Is there anything in this world, lord, which is clearer and brighter than the light of the autumn moon?" "Yes, lady," replied involuntarily the hoary professor, "there is a young student who has come to my school from Nabadwip;—his intellect is brighter and clearer than the light of the autumn moon."

Raghunath heard this conversation, his angry thoughts were dispelled, he rushed forward and fell at his beloved professor's feet. Pakshadhara raised him and embraced him, and the next day he confessed and proclaimed before all that Raghunath had really beaten him in the discussion of the preceding day. The triumph of Raghunath was complete, and he returned to Nabadwip and founded the school of logic in that place which has continued to be most renowned

school of logic in India during these three centuries.

The story narrated above probably only gives a concrete shape the fact that, since the sixteenth century, the school of logic at Mithila has declined, and the school of logic at Nabadwip has prospered. An uninterrupted line of renowned logicians have flourished in that town from the town of Raghunath to the present day.*

Raghunath was still a poor man, but learning has always been honoured in this country by high and low alike, and it is said that a substantial cowherd of the name of Hari Ghosh helped the young professer to build his *tol.* Students from all parts of India came to the scholar who had beaten Pakshadhara in logic, and Raghunath lived to be a great and a famous man.

His great work in logic is *Chintamani Didhiti.* Any attempt to explain the contents of this book would be beyond the scope of the present volume.

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* I paid a visit to a *tol* of logic in Nabadwip in 1876, and met students there from all parts of India. On my asking them the reason of their coming to Bengal for education, they told me that while the Vedas were taught at Benares, and other branches of learning in other places, Logic was nowhere taught as thoroughly as at Nabadwip.

CHAPTER IX.

Raghunandan and his Institutes.

Sixteenth century.

We have remarked in the preceding chapter that Mithila or North Behar was one of the most cultured kingdoms in ancient India. Among all the nations of the Epic Age, the Videhas of Mithila were considered the most cultured. And when the nations of the Epic Age declined in power, the Magadhas of South Behar took the lead, and were for centuries the most powerful and the most enlightened nation in India. There can be little doubt that Bengal was first colonized by Aryans from Behar, *i.e.*, from the sister kingdoms of Mithila and Magadha, and that for two thousand years Bengal received culture and knowledge from her western sisters. And when the light of modern literature and philosophy and religious reform dawned on Bengal in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we still mark that the light proceeded from the west. Chandidas's poetry was inspired by Bidyapati and other poets of Mithila; Chaitanya's reform was a survival and a revival of the monastic Buddhism of Magadha; Raghunath's school of logic was an offshoot of the schools of Mithila; and lastly Raghunandan's compilation of sacred laws was in imitation of such compilations made in Mithila.

Since the sixteenth century, however, Bengal has taken the lead. Chandidas has been followed by a host

of poets and writers in Bengal, down to the present century, whose equals Behar has not produced. Vaishnavism still flourishes in Bengal, and has been succeeded by the more enlightened Brahmoism, based on the same principles of human equality and brotherhood, while Magadha has witnessed no religious reforms in modern times. And lastly the philosophical school of Raghunath, founded in Nabadwip, is at the present day the most renowned school of Hindu logic in India, while philosophy and logic have declined in Mithila.

The compilation of sacred laws for the regulation of the conduct of Aryan Hindus began in India before the time of Buddha; and in those days each Sutra-Charana or distinct Sutra school had its separate body of laws for the use of the followers of that particular school. The Charanyavyuha names five distinct Charanas or schools of the Rig Veda, twenty-seven of the Black Yajur Veda, fifteen of the White Yajur Veda, twelve of the Sama Veda, and nine of the Atharva Veda.

The spread of Buddhism somewhat dislocated the old arrangements, and the distinctions beween the separate Sutra schools were lost. The institutes of Manu, which in their existing form belong approximately to the time of Christ, do not connect themselves with any particular Sutra school, but profess to be the rules for all Aryan Hindus. In other respects, however, Manu's institutes are still archaic; they recognize Vedic gods and Vedic sacrifices, and ignore the modern Hindu Trinity, and condemn the worship of images.

In later times, after the decline of the old Hindu

races of Northern India, and even after the conquest of India by the Muhammadans, bodies of sacred law still continued to be compiled or recast. And these modern compilations, like those of Vyasa and Parasara, inculcate modern Hinduism and modern usages, and the worship of images.

The entire body of sacred laws, *viz.*, the Sutras, Manu's institutes, and the later law books, are spoken of together as *Smriti*; and the study of Smriti is still a very important portion of orthodox training all over India. It may well be imagined that the study of Smriti was not neglected in Mithila, and spread from Mithila to Bengal.

In the ninth century after Christ, Medhatithi flourished in Mithila, and wrote the first great and authoritative commentary on Manu's institutes. Bengal followed the lead, and soon distanced her western sister. Kullukabhatta was the son of Dibakarabhatta, and was born near Gaur in the fourteenth century. His commentary on Manu's institutes has almost replaced all others, and has been pronounced by so great an authority as Sir William Jones to be the most clear, the most concise, and the most perspicuous commentary that has ever been written.

In the eleventh century after Christ, Vijnanesvara of Western India compiled the law of succession, called the Mitakshara, which prevails in Behar and in the west. The law of succession in Bengal is somewhat different; and in the fourteenth century, Jimutavahana of Bengal compiled the Dayabhaga, which has since been considered the authoritative work on Hindu succession in

Bengal. Colebrooke has translated both Mitakshara and Dayabhaga into English.

But it was left to Raghunandan to compile a complete code of rules for religious rites and observances, as they obtain in Bengal in the modern age. Raghunandan was also of Nabadwip, and was by about twenty years junior to Chaitanya and Raghunath; and he is said to have also received his early training from the venerable Vasudeb Sarbabhauma. No other school master in the world has perhaps turned out such three brilliant and great men as Chaitanya, Raghunath and Raghunandan!

While Chaitanya devoted himself to religious reform, while Raghunath spent his life in philosophical and logical studies, Raghunandan made his mark by an authoritative and exhaustive compilation of the rules of orthodox rites and observances for the people of Bengal. He divided this great work into twenty-eight chapters, each devoted to a separate subject,* and he based his rules on a profusion of quotations from the highest authorities. He laboured for twenty-five

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* He himself specifies the twenty-eight subjects thus:—

মলিম্লুচে দায়ভাগে সংস্কারে শুদ্ধিনির্ণয়ে।
প্রায়শ্চিত্তে বিবাহে চ তিথৌ জন্মাষ্টমী ব্রতে॥
দুর্গোৎসবে ব্যবহৃতাবেকাদশ্যাদিনির্ণয়ে।
তড়াগ ভবনোৎসর্গে বৃষোৎসর্গে ত্রয়ে ব্রতে॥
প্রতিষ্ঠায়াং পরীক্ষায়াং জ্যোতিষে বাস্তুযজ্ঞকে।
দীক্ষায়াং আহ্নিকে কৃত্যে ক্ষেত্রে শ্রীপুরুষোত্তমে॥
সামশ্রাদ্ধে যজুঃশ্রাদ্ধে শূদ্রকৃত্যবিচারণে।
ইত্যষ্টাবিংশতি স্থানে তত্ত্বং বক্ষ্যামি যত্নতঃ॥

years over this great work, and it remains a monument, not only of his industry and learning, but also of his comprehensive genius.

It is needless to state that Raghunandan's institutes, though still considered the authoritative work in the matter of rites and observances in Bengal, is losing its importance with the progress of the times. An orthodox work which insists with the utmost rigour on distinctions between Brahmans and non-Brahmans (miscalled Sudras) must lose its weight in an age when the non-Brahmans also claim to be true born Aryan Hindus, entitled to the learning and the privileges of Aryan Hindus. A work which multiplies and insists on purile rites and hurtful restrictions must become obsolete, when the rites are ignored and the restrictions are disregarded, in pursuit of progress and national well-being. A work which lays down the duties of Hindu widows with cruel severity, and recommends the burning of widows on the pyre, must fall into disrepute when widow-marriage has been legalized, and the burning of widows has been stamped out as an offence and a crime against humanity. A more advanced and healthier compilation of rules for the social and religious use of modern Hindus, based on their ancient scriptures, has become a desideratum.

These remarks should not be considered as a reflection against Raghunandan; it is no fault of that great compiler that the times have changed, and that the rules compiled by him are no longer observed. The scholar and the student can respect the laws of Manu or of Justinian, although those laws have

become obsolete among modern Hindus and modern Romans.

The school of *Smriti* started by Raghunandan still continues in Nabadwip. Eminent teachers have handed down the traditional learning from generation to generation, and students still attend the *Smriti tols* of that classic town, the Oxford of Bengal.

Besides *Nyaya*, and *Smriti* other branches of Sanscrit learning have also been studied in Bengal. In *Vyakarana* or grammar, Bopadeva of Bengal is the greatest writer that modern India has produced. And Krishnananda of Nabadwip, who was a contemporary of Chaitanya, was a great compiler of *Tantra* literature, a literature which flourishes in Bengal only among all the provinces of India. We do not believe however that the other provinces lose much by the absence of this class of literature, as it only reproduces Buddhist superstitious rites and practices in a Hindu guise, with much that is dark, cruel and reprehensible. Similar Tantra works and Tantra practices are known in Thibet and other Buddhist countries to this day.

CHAPTER X.

Mukunda Ram and his Chandi.

Seventeenth century.

The brilliant sixteenth century, which witnessed the rise of Chaitanya, Raghunath and Raghunandan in Bengal, also witnessed the conquest of that country by the great Akbar, with the help of his Hindu generals Todar Malla and Man Sinha. These events influenced the national mind, and the first original poem in Bengali, apart from songs and translations, was composed in the seventeenth century. Mukunda Ram Chakrabarti has fortunately left us some account of himself and his times. He was born in the village of Daminya, near Salimabad, in the District of Burdwan. He was the son of Hriday Misra, and the grandson of Jagannath Misra, and he had an elder brother of the name of Kabi Chandra. He tells us that when Man Sinha became the ruler of Bengal, the oppression of a subordinate Muhammadan officer drove him from his home, and that after long wanderings he found a kind protector in Bankura Deb, a Zemindar in the District of Midnapur. The seat of this Zemindar was in the village of Anra, and he engaged the learned guest as a tutor to his son, Raghunath, who subsequently succeeded his father in the estate, and finds frequent mention in the poet's work.

It is so seldom that a poet leaves us an account of himself and his times, that we cannot resist the tempta-

tion of quoting the whole of the account left by Mukunda Ram in a note.* We give the substance of it in English.

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* গ্রন্থ উৎপত্তির কারণ।

শুন ভাই সভাজন কবিত্বের বিবরণ
এই গীত হৈল যেন মতে।
উরিয়া মায়ের বেশে কবির শিয়র দেশে
চণ্ডিকা বসিলা আচম্বিতে॥
সহর সিলিমাবাজ যাহাতে সজ্জন রাজ
নিবসে নিয়োগী গোপীনাথ।
তাহার তালুকে বসি দামিন্যাতে চাষ-চাষি
নিবাস পুরুষ ছয় সাত॥
ধন্য রাজা মানসিংহ বিষ্ণুপদে যেবা ভৃঙ্গ
গৌড় বঙ্গ উৎকল মহীপ।
রাজা মানসিংহের কালে প্রজার পাপের ফলে
ডীহীদার মামুদ সরিপ॥
উজির হইলা রায় জাদা বেপারিরে দেয় খেদা
ব্রাহ্মণ বৈষ্ণবের হইল অরি।
কোণে কোণে দিয়া দড়া পনর কাঠায় কুড়া
নাহি শুনে প্রজার গোহারি॥
সরকার হইলা কাল খিল ভূমি লেখে লাল
বিনা উপকারে খায় ধুতি।
পোদ্দার হইল যম টাকা আড়াই আনা কম
পাই লভ্য লয় দিন প্রতি॥
ডীহীদার অবোধ খোজ কড়ি দিলে নাহি রোজ
ধান্য গোরু কেহ নাহি কেনে।
প্রভু গোপীনাথ নন্দী বিপাকে হইলা বন্দী
হেতু কিছু নাহি পরিত্রাণে॥
জামিন্দার প্রতীত আছে প্রজারা পলায় পাছে
দুয়ার চাপিয়া দেয় থানা।
প্রজা হইল ব্যাকুলি বেচে ঘরের কুড়ালি
টাকার দ্রব্য বেচে দশ আনা॥

The ancestors of Mukunda Ram to the sixth or seventh generation lived in the petty village of Daminya, engaged in agricultural pursuits. It appears that when

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সহায় শ্রীমন্ত খাঁ চণ্ডী বাটী যার গাঁ
যুক্তি কৈলা মুনিব খাঁর সনে।
দামিন্যা ছাড়িয়া যাই সঙ্গে রমানাথ ভাই
পথে চণ্ডী দিলা দরশনে॥
ভেটনায় উপনীত রূপ রায় নিল বিত্ত
যদু কুণ্ডু তিলি কৈলা রক্ষা।
দিয়া আপনার ঘর নিবারণ কৈল ডর
দিবস তিনের দিন ভিক্ষা॥
বাহিয়া ঘরাই নদী সদাই স্মরয়ে বিধি
নেউটিয়া হইল উপনীত।
দারুকেশ্বর তরি পাইল পাণ্ডুর পুরি
গঙ্গাদাস বড় কৈল হিত॥
নারায়ণ পরাসর এড়াইল দামোদর
উপনীত কুচট্যা নগর।
তৈল বিনা কৈনু স্নান করিনু উদক পান
শিশু কান্দে ওদনের তরে॥
আশ্রম পুখরি আড়া নৈবেদ্য শালুক পোড়া
পূজা কৈনু কুমুদ প্রসূনে।
ক্ষুধায় পরিশ্রমে নিদ্রা যাই সেই ধামে
চণ্ডী দেখা দিলেন স্বপনে॥
হাতে লইয়া পত্র মসী আপনি কলমে বসি
নানা ছন্দে লিখেন কবিত্ব।
পড়েছি অনেক তন্ত্র নাহি জানি কোন মন্ত্র
আজ্ঞা দিলা জপি নিত্য নিত্য॥
দেবী চণ্ডী মহা মায়া দিলেন চরণ ছায়া
আজ্ঞা দিলেন রচিতে সঙ্গীত।
চণ্ডীর আদেশ পাই শিলা পার হইয়া যাই
আরড়ায় হইনু উপনীত।

Man Sinha became the ruler of Bengal, Muhammad Sharif, an oppressive man, was invested with power and influence, and as a consequence the people were grievously oppressed. Brahmans and Vaishnavas, traders and agriculturists, were subjected to equal tyranny; fallow lands were entered as arable; 15 katas of land were reckoned as a bigah by a vicious system of measurement. Every Rupee was short by 2½ annas. The agriculturists began to sell off their cattle and grain, of which there was a glut in the market, so that things of the value of a rupee sold for 10 annas. Gopinath Nandi, the Talukdar under whom the poet held his lands, and who is described as a pious man, got into a scrape and was imprisoned.

আরড়া ব্রাহ্মণ ভূমি পুরুষে পুরুষে স্বামী
নরপতি ব্যাসের সমান।
পড়িয়া কবিত্ব বাণী সন্তোষিনু নৃপমণি
পাঁচ আড়ী মাপি দিল ধান॥
সুধন্য বাঁকুড়া রায় ভাঙ্গিল সকল দায়
শিশু পাছে কৈল নিয়োজিত।
তার সুত রঘুনাথ রাজগুণে অবদাত
গুরু বলি করিল পূজিত॥
সঙ্গে শ্রীমান নন্দী সে জানে স্বপন সন্ধি
অনুদিন করিল যতন।
নিত্য দেন অনুমতি রঘুনাথ নরপতি
গায়নেরে দিলেন ভূষণ॥
বীর মাধবের সুত রূপে গুণে অদভুত
বীর বাঁকুড়া ভাগ্যবান।
তার সুত রঘুনাথ রাজ গুণে অবদাত
শ্রীকবি কঙ্কণে রস গান॥

After consultation with the wise Srimanta Khan of Chandibati, our poet left the home of his fathers in bitter grief to seek shelter elsewhere. He reached Bhetna, where Jadu Kundu, as the poet gratefully records, gave him food and shelter for three days. Honest Jadu Kundu! Little did he dream when, in compliance with one of the most amiable customs of the country, he gave shelter to a poor houseless stranger, that for his good service, for which he sought no return, his name would live in immortal verse. The poet then went down the Gharai and crossed the Darakeswar, and reached Pandurpur, where Gangadas did him some service. At last Mukunda Ram crossed the Damodar and reached Kuchutya in much distress, the children crying for food. Oppressed with hunger, the poet fell asleep near a tank, and saw the goddess Chandi in a vision, and she bade him sing her glory. Soon after, the poet found shelter in the village of Anra in the district of Midnapur, where he accosted the zemindar Bankura Deb in verse for which he was rewarded with five *aris* of dhan. The zemindar received the talented stranger with open arms, and engaged him as a tutor to his son, Raghunath. In those days zemindars delighted in gathering learned and talented men round them, and as there was no reading public, this was the only sort of encouragement that learning received.

Mukunda Ram, who obtained the title of Kabi Kankan, had two sons, Sivaram and Mahesh, and two daughters Chitrarekha and Jashoda. The descendants of the poet still live, not in Daminya, but in the neighbouring

village of Bainan. The descendants of Raghunath, the pupil and protector of the poet, live in Senapat a village about four miles from Anra; their estates have all been taken over by the Raja of Burdwan.

Mukunda Ram has left us two poems. The first is the tale of Kalaketu, a hunter, and his wife Fullara; and the other one is the celebrated story of Srimanta Sadagar. We will briefly narrate the plot of each poem.

The book begins, as usual, with prayers to several gods and goddesses, and with an account of Chandi, her previous existence as the daughter of Daksha, the destruction of his celebrated sacrifice by Siva, Chandi's second birth as the daughter of the Himalayas, the destruction of Kama, the grief and religious penances of Chandi, and her final union with Siva.* Then follows the story of Kalaketu.

Kalaketu the hero of the poem is a hunter of low birth, and proves to be the strongest among the strong. He frequents the wood every day with his bow and arrows, and kills wild beasts, often fighting numbers of them single-handed. His fame as a brave young hunter increases day by day, and in course of time he is married to Fullara. The married life of Kalaketu and

* For want of space we are unable to make any extracts, but the reader will find many passages in this part of the work full of the choicest humour. We would refer him to the disputes between Hara and Parvati, as well as to the regrets of women at their own evil fate, when they see the handsome face and form of the bridegroom, Siva. Most of our readers know the celebrated passages of Bharat Chandra on similar subjects, but most of them do not know that these passages of Bharat Chandra are only imitations from the original of Mukunda Ram.

Fullara has been well depicted by the poet, and the strongest impression that one receives from a perusal of the poem is its intense reality. The hunter, strong and robust, but somewhat rude in his habits, frequents the forests and lives on the proceeds of his spoil. And the poor but faithful Fullara takes the meat to the market, cooks food for her husband, and administers to his wants like a careful housewife that she is.

But Chandi will not allow her favourite Kalaketu to pine in poverty. She appears in his hut during his absence as a woman of superb beauty, and gives Fullara to understand that she is desirous of sharing with her the affections of Kalaketu. Poor, simple-minded Fullara! She is in a great fright at seeing a rival of such beauty, and with ill-concealed jealousy she advises her to return to her husband, and never to leave the paths of virtue. A long conversation ensues, and the whole is one of the most interesting passages in the work. The fair intruder however is immovable, and we almost think we see the smile of ridicule which curls her sweet lips as she listens to her rival. Fullara then discourses on her own sorrows, and tries to dissuade the fair visitant from sharing them, and the eloquence with which she dwells on her poverty and troubles all the twelve months in the year, would almost affect any listener. But the disguised goddess says, truly enough, that she has wealth of her own with which she will make Kalaketu happy. Throughout the passage the replies of the goddess have a double meaning. Most of our Bengali readers are familiar with the

account in Bharat Chandra's poetry, which Chandi gives of herself to Iswar the ferryman when he takes her across the river. The goddess, while virtually giving a true account of herself, makes the ferryman believe that she is a poor woman who has left her husband's home in grief. But most of our readers are *not* aware that the passage is only a copy of a similar passage in Mukunda Ram's poetry, and in some places it is a copy word for word.*

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* We give a few extracts here from the remarkable conversation between Fullara and Chandi, but prudently refrain from venturing to translate them into English.

সখী গৃহে খুদ সের করিয়া উধার।
সম্ভ্রমে ফুল্লরা আইলা কুঁড়িয়া দুয়ার॥
বাম বাহু স্ফুরঙ্গে নাচয়ে বাম আঁখি।
কুঁড়িয়া দুয়ারে দেখে রাকা চন্দ্রমুখী।
প্রণাম করিয়া রামা করয়ে জিজ্ঞাসা।
কোন জাতি কাহার জায়া কহ সত্য ভাষা॥
হাস্যমুখী অভয়ার হৃদয়ে উল্লাস।
ফুল্লরারে অভয়া করেন উপহাস॥
ইলাবৃতে ঘর মোর জাতিতে ব্রাহ্মণী।
শিশুকাল হইতে আমি ভ্রমি একাকিনী॥
বন্দ্য বংশে স্থিতি মোর বাপেরা ঘোষাল।
সাত সতা গৃহে বাস বিষম জঞ্জাল॥
তুমি গো ফুল্লরা যদি দেও অনুমতি।
এই স্থানে কতক দিন করি যে বসতি॥
এতেক বাক্য হইল যদি অভয়ার তুণ্ডে।
আকাশ ভাঙ্গিয়া পড়ে ফুল্লরার মুণ্ডে॥
হৃদে বিষ মুখে মধু জিজ্ঞাসে ফুল্লরা।
দূর হইল ক্ষুধা তৃষা রন্ধনের ত্বরা॥
রচিয়া মধুর পদে একপদী ছন্দ।
অভয়া মঙ্গল গান শ্রীকবি মুকুন্দ॥

We should add that here, as elsewhere, the extracts we have given from Mukunda Ram are from the scholarly edition of his works compiled from old manuscripts.

Fullara says :—

এরূপ যৌবনে ছাড়িয়া ভবনে
কেনে আইলা পরবাস।
কহ গো সুন্দরি কেনে একেশ্বরী
ভ্রমিতে নাহি তরাস ॥

The goddess in disguise says;—

কি আর জিজ্ঞাসা কর আইলাম তোমার ঘর
বীরের দেখিতে নারি দুঃখ।
দিয়া আপনার ধন তুষিব বীরের মন
আজি হৈতে সম্পদের সুখ ॥
কি কব দুঃখের কথা গঙ্গা নামে মোর সতা
স্বামী যারে ধরয়ে মস্তকে।
বরঞ্চ গরল খায় আমা পানে নাহি চায়
ভবন ত্যজিনু সেই শোকে ॥
গঙ্গা বড় সোহাগলী সদাই পাড়য়ে গালী
স্বামীর সোহাগ দরপে।
দেখিয়া পতির তোষ উঠিল পরম রোষ
লাজে জলাঞ্জলি দিনু তাপে ॥
সতিনের সম্মান সেই মোর অপমান
অভিমানে নাহি মেলি আঁখি।
দেখিয়া দারুণ সতা বিবাহ দিলেন পিতা
পিতৃকুলে হইলাম বিমুখী ॥
বিষকণ্ঠ মোর স্বামী সহিতে না পারি আমি
পঞ্চমুখে দেয় গালাগালি।
বিধি কৈল অবলা তাহে সতীনের জ্বালা
পরিতাপে হইয়া গেনু কালী ॥

Poor Fullara, when she finds all her entreaties and tears are of no avail, leaves the hut and goes to meet her husband in the agony of her heart. She returns

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উগ্র আমার পতি হৈলাম অবলা জাতি
পাঁচ মুখে গালি পাড়ে কোপে।
একে সতিনের জ্বালা কত সহে অবলা
লাজে জলাঞ্জলি দিনু তাপে॥
দারুণ দৈবের গতি দরিদ্র আমার পতি
পঞ্চ মুখে গালি পাড়ে কোপে।
বিষকণ্ঠ মোর স্বামী সহিতে না পারি আমি
তনু শুখাইল সেই তাপে॥
খাও পর যত তুমি সকল যোগাব আমি
আমাকে ত না বাসিহ ভীন।
সমকালে সমভাগে থাকিব বীরের আগে
আজি হৈতে সম্পদের চীন॥
শতেক রাজার ধন অঙ্গে মোর আভরণ
ভুবন কিনিতে পারি ধনে।
সম্পদ বিস্তর দিব কেবল ভকতি নিব
শ্রীকবি কঙ্কণ রস ভণে॥

Fullara says ;—

তোরে আমি বলি ভাল স্বামীর বসতি চল
পরিণামে পাবে বড় দুখ।
শুন হের মূঢ় মতি যদি ছাড় নিজ পতি
কেমতে তরিবে লোক মুখ॥
স্বামী বনিতার পতি স্বামী বনিতার গতি
স্বামী বনিতার বিধাতা।
স্বামীই পরম ধন স্বামী বিনে অন্য জন
কেহ নহে সুখ মোক্ষ দাতা॥

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with Kalaketu who is equally struck at the remarkable beauty of the fair visitant, but politely rebukes her for coming alone into his house. Chandi makes no reply, on which Kalaketu, with his accustomed boorishness, wants to send her out somewhat unceremoniously, and even takes to his bow and arrows. But lo ! his strength fails him, and he stands like a pictured warrior, unable to shoot. Chandi then discovers herself, and to make a long story short, points out the spot where gold and treasures are buried, and Kalaketu becomes a rich man. By order of Chandi he hews down a forest, and founds a new town dedicated to the goddess.

In his account of the founding of the new town the poet gives us a graphic picture of the manners of the times in which the work was written. The way in which raiyats were induced to settle in a new village, the rights and immunities promised to them, the loan of cattle and grain and money given them, the different customs of the people of different faiths and castes,—Muhammadans, Brahmans, Vaidyas, Kayasthas, Goalas, Telis, Kamars, Kumars, &c.,—all this has been depicted with a fidelity and photographic minuteness unequalled in the whole range of Bengali literature.

Among the men who come to dwell in the new town, Gujrat, is one Bharu Datta an astute Kayastha and an impudent impostor. The poet has displayed a remarkable power in delineating this character. His vanity is unbounded, and the coolest impudence supplies the place of real worth. We subjoin a passage in which

Bharu Datta at his first meeting with Kalaketu gives a boastful account of himself. There is a vein of the richest humour pervading the passage.*

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* ভেট লয়া কাঁচকলা পশ্চাতে ভাঁড়ুর শালা
আগু ভাঁড়ু দত্তের পয়ান।
ফোঁটা কাটা মহা দম্ভ ছিঁড়া জোড়া কোঁচা লম্ব
শ্রবণে কলম খরশাণ॥
প্রণাম করিয়া বীরে ভাঁড়ু নিবেদন করে
সম্বন্ধ পাতায়া খুড়া খুড়া।
ছিঁড়া কম্বলে বসি মুখে মন্দ মন্দ হাসি
ঘন ঘন দেয় বাহু নাড়া॥
আইলাম বড়ই আশে বসিতে তোমার দেশে
আগে ডাকিবে ভাঁড়ু দত্তে।
যতেক কায়স্থ দেখ ভাঁড়ুর পশ্চাতে লেখ
কুলে শীলে বিচারে মহত্ত্বে॥
কহি যে আপন তত্ত্ব আমি দত্ত বালীর দত্ত
তিন কুলে আমার মিলন।
ঘোষ বসুর কন্যা দুই জায়া মোর ধন্যা
মিত্রে কৈনু কন্যা সমর্পণ॥
গঙ্গার দুকূল কাছে যতেক কায়স্থ আছে
মোর ঘরে করয়ে ভোজন।
পট্ট বস্ত্র অলঙ্কার দিয়া করি ব্যবহার
কেহ নাহি করয়ে বন্ধন॥
বহু পরিবার মেলা দুই নারী চারি শ্যালা
চারি পুত্র বহিনী শাশুড়ী।
ছয় জামাই ছয় চেড়ী এই হেতু সাত বাড়ী
ধান্য দিয়া না লইবে বাড়ী॥
ধান্য বলদ দিবে খুড়া দিবে হে বিছন পুড়া
ভান্যা খাইতে ঢেঁকি কুলা দিবে।
আমি পাত্র তুমি রাজা ইহা জানি কর পূজা
অবশেষে ভাঁড়ুরে জানিবে॥

The late hunter is no good judge of character; he takes Bharu Datta at his word, and honors him and entrusts him with power. Such men when invested with power invariably turn oppressive, and Bharu Datta is no exception to the rule. The people loudly murmur, and Kalaketu finds out his mistake and turns Bharu out of his office. With his usual effrontry and cunning, Bharu goes over to the King of Kalinga, arouses his jealousy at the sudden greatness of Kalaketu, and brings about a war between the two kings. Kalaketu is beaten and confined, but Chandi will not desert her follower. She appears in a vision to the King of Kalinga; and the next morning Kalaketu is released and sent to his own country, and Bharu Datta is disgraced.

The story of Srimanta Sadagar, which forms the subject of the second poem of Mukunda Ram, is so well known to most of our readers that a brief account of it will suffice. Dhanapati, a *Gandha Banik* by caste and trader by profession, exhibits his pigeons to the king one day, and it so happens that one of the pigeons flies off and drops where Khullana a girl of twelve is playing. Dhanapati goes to her and demands her pigeon, and is at the same time pleased with the amiable

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ভাঁড়ুর বচন শুনি মহাবীর মনে গণি
ভাঁড়ুরে করিল বহু মান।
দামিন্যা নগরবাসী সঙ্গীতের অভিলাষী
শ্রীকবি কঙ্কণ রস গান॥

face and demeanour of the young girl. His wife is a cousin of Khullana, and as merry repartees are allowed between such relatives, Khullana replies to him merrily and wittily. Proposals follow, and Khullana's father consents to the match. But his wife Rambhabati naturally hesitates to give her only girl to a man who has already a wife, and administers a sound curtain lecture to her mate, spiced with such mild epithets as "পড়ে শুনে হইলে পশু", with which many a careful house-wife in modern as well as in ancient times has expressed her kind regards for her husband. The bridegroom Dhanapati too has the benefit of a similar lecture from his wife Lahana, cousin of Khullana, for wishing to marry again at this mature age; but a kind word turneth away wrath, and Dhanapati knows the truth of the saying. He accosts Lahana in the politest of terms, says that the new bride is only to relieve Lahana of her menial work, and gives her gold for ornaments which have always a magic effect in comforting and composing the female mind. The marriage follows, but the happy pair are not allowed to taste its sweets. The king wishes to have a golden cage for a pet bird, and Dhanapati is ordered to go to Eastern Bengal where such articles were manufactured. Dhanapati leaves his village in the District of Burdwan, leaving his new wife Khullana to the tender mercies of her fellow-wife Lahana.

For some time the two wives live in peace, but as often happens in Hindu families, a female servant foments their jealousies and arouses their hatred towards

each other. Durbala, a character very powerfully drawn, repairs to the elder wife Lahana, discourses on the beauty of Khullana, and impresses on Lahana that Dhanapati will neglect her on his return. Such insinuations arouse Lahana's jealousy, and after some subterfuges she has a letter forged, purporting to come from Dhanapati, and directing that Khullana should be employed in tending goats. Khullana is no patient Griselda, for Mukunda Ram never paints characters with superhuman virtues or vices. Khullana, though the heroine of the poem, is like any ordinary woman of flesh and blood, and it is no part of the poet's scheme to represent her as possessed of extraordinary patience or virtue. She falls out with her fellow-wife, and even returns her taunts and blows.

Khullana however succumbs at last, and consents to take out her husband's goats every day to the fields to graze. With a heavy heart and bitter tears she goes through this unaccustomed and humiliating task, and the account of her long sufferings and sorrows and of her wanderings in fields and jungles, her soliloquies and addresses to birds, her sleep and her dream of her mother,—these are among the most affecting passages in the work.*

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* We make a few extracts here.

খুল্লনা ছাগল রাখে পাপ জ্যৈষ্ঠ মাসে।
অগ্নি সম অঙ্গ পোড়ে রবির প্রকাশে॥
আষাঢ়ে পূরিত মহী নব মেঘের জল।
ছেলি চরাইতে রামা নাহি পায় স্থল॥

Chandi at last comes to the rescue of Khullana. She appears to Lahana in a vision and upbraids her, and Lahana repents, embraces Khullana as her sister, and

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শ্রাবণে বরিষে মেঘ দিবস রজনী।
ছাগল চরিতে স্থল না পায় অবনী॥
শরের আড়াতে রামা চরায়েন ছাগী।
কোলে করি নালা পার করে দুঃখভাগী॥
ভাদরে চরায় ছেলি ভিজে সর্ব্ব গা।
অঙ্গুলির সন্ধিতে পাঁকুই হইল ঘা॥
ভাদরের জলবৃষ্টি যেন বাজে শেল।
দিন তিন চাহিলে লহনা না দেয় তেল॥
দুঃখে সুখে খুল্লনা শরৎকালে ভাবে।
আশ্বিনে আসিবেন প্রভু অম্বিকা উৎসবে॥
নিকেতনে প্রাণনাথ কৈল বনবাস।
কার্ত্তিক মাস আইল হিমের প্রকাশ॥
তুষার শীতল ঋতু হিম চারি মাস।
খুল্লনার শীত খণ্ডে রবির প্রকাশ॥
আইল বসন্ত ঋতু প্রচণ্ড তপন।
অশোক কিংশুক ফুটে পলাশ কাঞ্চন॥
নগরিয়া প্রজাগণ শুকায় কেহ ধান।
অপরাধ কৈলে লোক করে অপমান॥

It was for a *Suk* bird that her husband went to East Bengal to procure a golden cage, and Khullana bursts forth into an exclamation of grief on seeing a pair of *Suk* birds on the tree :—

সারী শুয়া তুমি দিলে এতেক যাতনা।
আসি রাজা বিদ্যমান পিঞ্জরে সাধিতে মান
অনাথিনী করিলে খুল্লনা॥
গৌড় গেলা প্রাণনাথ ছেলি রাখি খাই ভাত
পরিতে না মিলে পরিধান।
সতিনী মরণ তাকে কেবল তোমার পাকে
খুল্লনার এত অপমান॥

relieves her of her humiliating work. Soon after Dhanapati, who like an easy-going, pleasure-loving man was leading a life of pleasure in Eastern Bengal, returns to his country with the golden cage, and who is so happy

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আমার বধিতে প্রাণ আস কিবা এই স্থান
পিঞ্জরের বিলম্ব দেখিয়া।
হের আইস শারী শুক ঘুচাহ মনের দুখ
গৌড়ে বারতা দেহ গিয়া॥
শিখিয়া ব্যাধের কলা করে ধরি সাতনলা
কাননে এড়িব জাল ফান্দে।
তোমারে ধরিয়া শুক ঘুচাব মনের দুখ
একাকিনী সারী যেন কান্দে॥
শারীর খাইয়া মাথা দেখ মোর দুঃখ ব্যথা
তোমাকে লাগিবে মোর বধ।
কর কর্ম্মে অবধান রাখহ আমার প্রাণ
যাও তুমি গৌড় জনপদ॥
আমারে করিয়া দয়া দুঃখের বারতা লয়া
দেহ মোর স্বামীর বারতা।
উড়ে গেল সারী শুক খুল্লনা ভাবয়ে দুখ
মুকুন্দ রচিল গীত গাথা॥

Khullana makes a similar exclamation on seeing some bees collecting honey from flowers :—

ভ্রমরী ভ্রমর তোরে যুড়ি কর
না গাও মধুর গীত।
তোর মধুর রায় কাম সরে তায়
চিত কৈল চমকিত॥
সঙ্গে তোর বধূ পান কর মধু
কি কব সুখের ওর।
অনাথী দেখিয়া তোর নাহি দয়া
চিত্ত হৈল মোর চোর॥

as the young and beauteous Khullana, the darling of her husband?

তোর সঙ্গে অলিনী নিবাস নলিনী
না জান বিরহ ব্যথা।
চিত্ত চমকিত যদি গাও গীত
খাও ভ্রমরীর মাথা ॥
স্বপথে বিপথে পাপ কৈলি পথে
বিনয়ে মাতয়ে হরি।
করিনু বিনয় না হৈলে সদয়
কিসের বিনয় করি ॥
তুঁহু মাতোয়াল মোর হৈলি কাল
না শুন বিনয় বাণী।
ধুতুরার ফুলে কত মধু পিলে
তাহা মনে আমি গণি ॥
ছাড়িয়া সুহৃদ চলে ষটপদ
কোকিল সুনাদ পূরে।
বিনয় অর্চ্চনা করয়ে খুল্লনা
কর যোড় করি শিরে ॥
রাজা রঘুনাথ গুণে অবদাত
রসিক মাঝে সুজন।
তার সভাসদ রচি চারু পদ
শ্রীকবি কঙ্কণ গান ॥

Khullana's address to the Kokil also deserves to be quoted :—

কোকিল হে কত ডাক সুললিত রা।
মধুস্বরে দিবানিশি নিত্য উগার বিষি
বিরহী জনের পোড়ে গা ॥
নন্দন কাননে বাস সুখে রহ বার মাস
কামের প্রধান সেনাপতি।
কে তোমারে বলে ভাল ভিতরে বাহিরে কাল
বধ কৈলে অনাথ যুবতী ॥

We shall not dwell on the joy of the young wife on the return of her husband; nor on the schemes of Durbala who, true to her character, goes first to congratulate Khullana with "আর শুনেছ ছোট মা সাধু আইল ঘরে" &c., and then to Lahana to foment her anger and jealousy with "আর শুনেছ বড় মা সতার চরিত" &c. Then follows a graphic account of Durbala's bringing things from the market and the young wife cooks them with skill of a *chéf de cuisine* to please her husband. Lahana attempts to conceal her cruelty towards Khullana by many specious excuses,

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আর যদি কাড় রাও মদনের মাথা খাও
বসন্তের শতেক দোহাই।
তোর রব স্বতন্তর অঙ্গ কৈল জ্বর জ্বর
অনাথীরে তোর দয়া নাই॥
জাতি অনুরোধে গাও না চিনসি বাপ মাও
কাল সাপ কালিয়া বরণ।
সদাগর আছে যথা কেন নাহি যাও তথা
এই বনে ডাক অকারণ॥
আসিয়া বসন্ত কালে বসিয়া রসাল ডালে
প্রতি দিন দেয়সি যন্ত্রণা।
হেন লয় মোর মনে আসি কিবা এই স্থানে
পিকরূপী হইল লহনা॥
খাও স্বাদু নানা ফল উগারহ হলাহল
যোষা বধ করহ কি রীতি।
বায়স তোমারে পোষে পাপ সহযোগ দোষে
অনাথীর বধে দেহ মতি॥
পিক যায় অন্য বন খুল্লনা অস্থির মন
চলে রামা অপর কানন।
রচিয়া ত্রিপদী ছন্দ পাঁচালী করিল বন্ধ
চক্রবর্ত্তী শ্রীকবি কঙ্কণ॥

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and vainly tries to dissuade Khullana from going to her lord. Needless it is to dwell on the raptures of the meeting between Dhanapati and Khullana who appears in superb dress and beauty, recounts her sufferings, but forgets them all in the embraces of her lord.

But there is no rest for the merchant. The king is in want of some spices, and Dhanapati must again leave his home and his young wife, then with child, and sail to Ceylon for the spices. Going down the Ajay river, the vessel comes to the modern Hugli River, and successively passes by Nabadwip, Santipur, Tribeni, and then comes into the boisterous Megna. There a storm arises and destroys most of the boats. The merchant then comes into the land of the Firingis (Portuguese) whom the poet has described in very uncomplimentary language. After this the merchant must come out into the open sea, and the poet's notions of geography become somewhat hazy, for he makes his hero pass first through a sea of prawns and lobsters, then through a sea of crabs, then through one of snakes, then of alligators, then of cowries, then of conches! Any how the merchant at last manages to come to Setubandha and thence to Celyon. In the adjacent seas Dhanapati sees, through the deception of Chandi, a marvellous sight, *viz.*, that of a damsel of superb beauty sitting on a lotus and swallowing an elephant! He narrates this story to the King of Ceylon who takes him to be a liar and an impostor and imprisons him, and so ends his adventure.

At Ujjaini, Khullana has a son whom she names Sripati or Srimanta. In course of time the infant grows

up to a boy, and with other boys goes to the village Patshala. One day, the guru gets angry with Srimanta, and taunts him in very vulgar terms in reference to the absence of his father. The boy returns home, and though of tender years, resolves on going in quest of his father. All persuasion is vain, the boy has the determination of a man, and he has made up his mind.

Poor Khullana has not the heart to let her son go to that distant region from whose bourne his father had not returned; but Chandi comes down, consoles the distressed mother, and promises to take special care of the son. Srimanta Sadagar sets sail, and in due time reaches Ceylon after witnessing the strange damsel on the lotus whom his father had seen. He repeats the story to the King of Ceylon who orders him to be executed for telling a lie. Poor Srimanta is led to the place of execution, but still remains unaltered in his faith towards Chandi, whom he addresses in the thirty-four consonants of the Bengali alphabet,—an address which Bharat Chandra has imitated in his Bidya Sundar. The goddess descends in the shape of an old Brahman woman, and ultimately rescues Srimanta after beating back the whole force of the king. The king at last discovers Chandi and worships her, honors her protege Srimanta, and promises to bestow his daughter Susila on him. But Srimanta is disconsolate, and will not marry till he sees his father. At his request the king releases all the prisoners, and they are one by one provided with money and things and sent home. The heart of the child throbs at the sight of his father whom he has never seen before, and the old man

gives a true account of himself to the young Srimanta, little knowing that it is his own son he is speaking to. Srimanta still remains incognito, and hands over the last will and testament which his father had left with Khullana before leaving home. Affecting is the passage in which the old man, on seeing the letter, suddenly recollects his distant home and cries out in bitter grief. The son discovers himself, and they both return home to the bosom of their family.

Such are the plots of Mukunda Ram's poems; with regard to the merits of his poetry we have said much already. Its most remarkable feature is its intense reality. Many of the incidents are superhuman and miraculous, but the thoughts and feelings and sayings of his men and women are perfectly natural, recorded with a fidelity which has no parallel in the whole range of Bengali literature.

The characters of Mukunda Ram, too, are not princes and princesses, but men and women in the ordinary ranks of life, a hunter of low caste and his wife, a trader and his two wives. The poet has no ordinary powers of character-painting. All the pictures he has drawn are from life; and often, without almost intending it, he hits off in a few lines a character, clear and distinguishable from all others. Kalaketu is a boorish, strong, brave and simple-minded hunter, Fullara a poor dutiful wife, Murari Sil an astute shop-keeper, Bharu Datta an impudent and pretending impostor, Dhanapati an ease-loving, easy-going, elderly, well-to-do trader, Lahana and Khullana are rival wives, with all

the faults and angry passions of rival wives, and Durbala is a scheming old servant, with all the mischievousness and self-importance of old servants in Hindu households.

Pathos is a strong point in Mukunda Ram's writings. A sufferer himself, he has a ready sympathy for all sufferers; and poor Fullara and poor Khullana are not ordinary sufferers. Mukunda Ram's language is flowing, perspicuous and musical, and a quiet humour pervades his poetry.

CHAPTER XI

Ram Prasad and his Songs.

Eighteenth century.

It is possible to be a true poet without being a great poet, and Ram Prasad Sen is a true poet, every inch of him. In his life and acts, no less than in his songs, the poet predominates over the man.

Raja Krishna Chandra Rai of Nadiya will always figure in the annals of Bengali literature as a liberal and enlightened patron of learning. The court of Krishna Chandra was an assemblage of poets and learned Brahmans. Of these, two have left their names and works to posterity. Ram Prasad Sen and Bharat Chandra Rai are the two great poets of the eighteenth century.

Ram Prasad Sen, a Vaidya by caste, was born in Kumarhatta in Halisahar in the district of Nadiya, probably about 1720. He was the son of Ram Ram Sen, and the grandson of Rameswara Sen; and he had a son named Ram Dulal, and a daughter named Jagadiswari.

In early life he went to Calcutta as a Sarkar or agent of a well-to-do citizen; but like Frank Osbaldistone, he filled his ledger books with poetry, and composed songs when he should have cast up accounts. The Head Sarkar took offence at this gross breach of all rules and precedents, and took the trembling young poet and his account books to his master.

The latter, however, very unlike the elder Mr. Osbaldistone, appreciated the talent of the young novice; and what was the surprise of the old Sarkar when the master, instead of reproving the bad accountant, admired the true poet, and sent him back to his native village on a pension of 30 Rupees per mensem. It is seldom that men of business appreciate talent so quickly or honor genius so handsomely. We transcribe the song which is said to have specially charmed the young accountant's master. It is a song addressed to the goddess Kali, and clothed in metaphor, as Ram Prasad's songs generally are.*

Ram Prasad, once more in his native village, gave full vent to his talent for songs. He had no work to do, no cares and anxieties to disturb his peace. Life for him was as a sweet poem,—one sweet song full of pathos and feeling. He was a Tantrika a devout worshipper of Kali, and he was careless of this world, and

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* আমায় দাও মা তসিলদারী।
আমি নেমক হারাম নই শঙ্করি॥
পদ রত্ন ভাণ্ডার সবাই লুটে ইহা আমি সহিতে নারি।
ভাঁড়ার জিম্মা আছে যার সে যে ভোলা ত্রিপুরারি॥
শিব আশুতোষ স্বভাব দাতা তবু জিম্মা রাখ তাঁরি।
অর্দ্ধ অঙ্গ জায়গীর তবু শিবের মাইনা ভারি॥
আমি বিনা মাইনের চাকর কেবল চরণ ধূলার অধিকারী
যদি তোমার বাপের ধারা ধর তবে বটে আমি হারি।
যদি আমার বাপের ধারা ধর তবেত মা পেতে পারি॥
প্রসাদ বলে এমন পদের বালাই লয়ে আমি মরি।
ও পদের মত পদ পাইতো সে পদ লয়ে বিপদ সারি॥

lived in his faith in Kali. Kali or Sakti, Durga or Chandi, is not an unapproachable deity; she is the ideal of a Hindu mother, tender and loving beyond expression, ministering to every want and helpful in every difficulty. In her illimitable love she must put up even with the reproaches of her wayward sons; and the songs to Kali are oftener complaints of her cruelty than thanksgivings for her mercy. Most of the songs of Ram Prasad relate to Kali, and it is impossible to convey to the English reader any thing of the pathos and the tenderness with which the poet appeals to his deity, or rather the child appeals to his mother. In this consists the beauty, the simplicity, the sweetness of Ram Prasad's songs, a sweetness so overpowering, that even to the present day the listener is affected by them as the very beggars of our towns sing the strains of Ram Prasad from street to street.

The fame of Ram Prasad Sen spread from day to day, till at last Raja Krishna Chandra Rai of Nadiya heard of him, and welcomed him, and listened to his songs. To know the poet was to admire him, to know the man was to like him, and Ram Prasad soon rose in the Raja's favour. He rewarded him with the title of Kabiranjan, and with the more substantial gift of a 100 bigahs of rent-free land. In return, Ram Prasad wrote a poem on the well-known story of Bidya Sundar, and dedicated it to the Raja. We must admit, this work is disappointing to the reader. It was not in Ram Prasad's line to write long narrative poems, and his attempt was a failure. Probably too his anxiety to make the present commensurate

with the kindness of the Raja hampered him in his composition. We may therefore dismiss this subject with the remark, that the *Bidya Sundar* of Ram Prasad is generally stiff and artificial, but shews a thorough mastery of an alliterative though somewhat artificial style.*

Several stories are told about Ram Prasad. It is said he went to Murshidabad with Raja Krishna Chandra, and sang to the Raja in a boat on the Hugli. The boat of Nawab Surajuddawla passed that way, and the Subahdar was pleased with Ram Prasad's songs, got him into his own boat, and commanded him to sing. Ram Prasad sang in Hindi, but the Subahdar would have none of it, and ordered Ram Prasad to sing the same songs he had sung just before. The poët did so, and it is said, the Subahdar was charmed with the performance.

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* *Bidya's lament on the apprehension of Sundar.*

কোন ধর্ম্ম হেন কর্ম্ম পোড়ে মর্ম্ম গাত্র চর্ম্ম
দিয়া দিব পাদুকা চরণে।
হৃদয়েশ এই বেশ পায়ে ক্লেশ কৃপা লেশ
কর ভাই অকাল মরণে।

The Queen's lament on the detection of her daughter's frailty.

নহে সুখী সুমুখী নিরখি নন্দিনীরে।
অসম্বর অম্বর অম্বর পড়ে শিরে॥

The Queen's address to the King.

শিরে হানি পাণি রাণী বলে কর কি।
শুন পর্ব্ব গর্ব্ব খর্ব্ব গর্ভবতী ঝী॥

A curious story is told of Ram Prasad's death. On the last day of the Kali Puja, when the Hugli was covered with boats carrying the images of Kali, Ram Prasad became unusually excited. He sang of Kali till, by one account, he jumped from his boat into the river and was drowned, or by another account, he fell down in a swoon and died.

We quote below a few of the most popular songs of Ram Prasad.*

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* মন কৃষিকাজ তোর এসে না।
এমন মানব জনম রইলো পড়ে আবাদ কর্‌লে ফলত সোণা।
কালী নামের দাওরে বেড়া ফসলে তশ্রূপ হবে না।
সে যে শক্ত বেড়া মুক্তকেশী তার কাছেতো যম ঘেঁসে না।
অদ্য অব্দ শতান্তে বা বাজাপ্ত হবে জান না।
এখন আপন ভেবে যতন করে চুটিয়ে ফসল কেটে নেনা।
গুরু রোপণ করেছেন বীজ তায় ভক্তি-বারি সেচে দেনা।
ওরে একলা যদি না ছেঁচ্‌তে পারিস রামপ্রসাদকে ডেকে নেনা॥

নিতান্ত যাবে দিন এদিন যাবে কেবল ঘোষণা রবে গো।
তারা নামে অসঙ্খ্য কলঙ্ক হবে গো।
এসেছিলাম ভবের হাটে হাট করে বসেছি ঘাটে
ওমা শ্রীসূর্য্য চলিল পাটে নায়ে লবে গো।
দশের ভরে ভরা নায় দুঃখী জনে ফেলে যায়।
ওমা তার ঠাঁই যে কড়ি চায় সে কোথা পাবে গো।
প্রসাদ বলে পাষাণ মেয়ে আসান দে মা ফিরে চেয়ে।
আমি ভাসান দিলাম গুণ গেয়ে ভবার্ণবে গো॥

মা আমায় ঘুরাবি কত।
কলুর চোক ঢাকা বলদের মত।
বেঁধে দিয়ে ভবের গাছে মা পাক দিতেছ অবিরত।
একবার খুলে দে মা চোকের ঠুলি হেরি তোর ঐ অভয় পদ॥

One great charm of his poetry consists in the simple homely similes, always drawn from familiar objects of lowly village life. The cultivated rice-field, the ferry boat, the village market, the oil-mill, such are the objects of his similes, round which he entwines his feeling songs with the most touching effect.

The eighteenth century produced many other poets in Bengal, and Ghanaram's voluminous work, written early in the century, has recently been published. But Ghanaram and other poets like him are little known to the reading public of Bengal. The songs of Ram Prasad and the poetry of Bharat Chandra are the greatest literary products of this century.

CHAPTER XII.

Bharat Chandra Rai.

Eighteenth century.

Contemporaneously with Ram Prasad Sen, and equally favoured by Raja Krishna Chandra Rai, lived a more skilful poet, the talented Bharat Chandra Rai,—a "mine of talent" or *Gunakar*,—as the Raja called him.

Bharat Chandra Rai was the fourth son of Raja Narendra Narain Rai, a Zemindar of Burdwan. The seat of his zemindari was at Pandua in the Pargana of Bhursut, and his residence was surrounded on all sides by a moat, traces of which are visible to the present day. Narendra Narain had disputes with Kirti Chandra Rai, Raja of Burdwan, and made insulting allusions with reference to Kirti Chandra's mother. The queen mother was incensed, and sent an army which attacked and took the forts of Bhabanipur and Pandua, and desolated the states of Narendra Narain. Narendra Narain was reduced to penury, and his young son Bharat Chandra fled for shelter to the house of his maternal uncle at Nawapara, near Gazipur, in the Pargana of Mandalghat. There he studied grammar and dictionary, and at the age of fourteen returned to his native village, and married a girl of the village Sarada. The match was considered dishonorable, and Bharat Chandra's elder brothers reproved him for it. The future poet left his home in disgust, and

took shelter with one Ram Chandra Munshi, a Kayastha inhabitant of Debanandpur near Bansbaria in the district of Hugli, and there commenced the study of Persian.

The first poems that Bharat Chandra published to the world were composed under curious circumstances. Bharat Chandra was asked to read hymns to Satya Narain on a certain occasion by the people with whom he lived. The festive day came, and how great was the surprise of the people when, instead of reading the verses usually read on such occasions, he read out *tripadi* verses specially composed by him for the occasion. How much greater was their astonishment when on being asked to chant verses again a few days after on a similar occasion, he read out a new set of *chaupadi* verses which he had composed afresh on the same subject. The poet was then only fifteen.

At the age of twenty Bharat returned home, and as he was well versed in the Persian language, he went over to the court of the Raja of Burdwan, as a Muktear or agent for his brothers for their joint estate.

Bharat's brothers however failed to remit rent in due time, and the Raja, actuated probably by his old grudge against the family, confiscated the estate and took it over as his *khas* lands. Bharat was imprudent enough to protest, and he was imprisoned. Poor Bharat Chandra was now in utter misery, but he did not lose heart. He bribed the jailor and escaped, and at once fled to Cuttack, where he lived under patronage of Siva Bhatta the Mahratta Subahdar of the place. Cuttack,

as our readers know, has always been a great stronghold of the Vaishnavas, and in their company Bharat turned a Vaishnava and assumed the dress and demeanour of the sect. Shortly after, while on his journey to Brindaban, he was surprised by some of his distant relatives at Khanakul Krishnagar. As rigid Hindus, they were shocked at the conversion of the poet. They prevented him from going to Brindaban, and after much persuasion made him forsake his Vaishnava dress, and Bharat was a Hindu householder once more. The readers of *Annada Mangal* know that in describing the double conversion of Vyasa, who first became a Vaishnava and then a Sakta or Saiva, the poet has partly explained and partly apologized for his own conduct.

After a short residence at his father-in-law's house at Sarada, Bharat Chandra went over to Chandranagar, where Indra Narain Pal Chaudhuri, Dewan of the French Government, received him with honor. This Pal Chaudhuri was a friend of Raja Krishna Chandra of Nadiya, and used to lend him money. On one occasion, when Raja Krishna Chandra came to Chandranagar, Indra Narain introduced the poet to him. The Raja was pleased with the young poet, took him over to Krishnaghar, and appointed him as a Pandit of his court on a monthly pay of 40 Rs. He was pleased with the short pieces which the poet now and then composed, and asked him to compose a long poem, *Annada Mangal*, after the style of Mukunda Ram's *Chandi*. Bharat composed the poem, and a Brahman of the name of Nilmani Samadar set it to music, and sang it

before the Raja in parts as it was composed. At the request of the Raja the tale of *Bidya Sundar* was subsequently embodied in the work. Krishna Chandra was so pleased with the poet that he made him a grant of 100 Rs. to enable him to build a house at Mulajor which village he leased to the poet on a rent of Rs. 600 per annum.

Shortly afterwards, an incursion of the Mahrattas compelled Raja Tilak Chandra Rai of Burdwan to flee with his mother to Kangachi near Mulajor, and they took *patni* lease of the village from the Raja of Krishnaghar in the name of a servant Ram Deb Nag. This Nag proved to be an oppressive Patnidar, and Bharat Chandra took a poet's revenge in a set of Sanskrit verses entitled the "Nagashtaka" or the eight verses on Nag. The Raja was so pleased with this performance that he made over to Bharat Chandra 16 Bighas at Mulajor and 150 Bighas at Ghusti *rent-free*, intending that Bharat should remove to the latter place if he chose. But Bharat's co-villagers would not allow him to leave, and Bharat continued to live at Mulajor. Bharat died at the age of 48, in the year 1760.

Critics have formed very different estimates of Bharat Chandra's poetical powers. Many of our countrymen of the old school would place him in the highest rank of poets, but we are unable to share this opinion. Bharat Chandra with all his gifts is but an imitator of Mukunda Ram, and we confess that Bharat Chandra's artificial and polished strains strike us as lifeless, when compared with the simple and faithful pictures from nature, with

which Mukunda Ram's works are replete. Mukunda Ram draws from nature, Bharat Chandra daubs his pictures with gorgeous colours. Bharat Chandra is the more polished and artificial poet. Mukunda Ram is the truer painter and the greater poet.

That Bharat Chandra has his beauties, none will deny. His three works *Annada Mangal*, *Bidya Sundar*, and *Manasinha* form one continuous story, and are in reality but one work. Like Mukunda Ram, Bharat Chandra intends to glorify the name and deeds of the goddess Uma or Chandi, and instead of narrating the story of an imaginary hero, he has taken up the story of the life of Bhabanand Mazumdar, the renowned ancestor of his patron and benefactor, Raja Krishna Chandra Rai of Nadiya. The poet begins with an account of the birth of Uma, the great feast given by Daksha to which Siva was not invited, the self-immolation of Uma in consequence, her second birth as daughter of the Himalayas, her marriage with Siva, and other mythological stories with which every Hindu is familiar. The poet's rare power of graceful versification enables him to tell these stories with effect, the reader peruses page after page with the same sense of pleasure, and at times he is struck with passages in which the poet shews a keen sense of humour. Such, for instance, is the description of Siva's marriage, and such again is the account of his disputes with his young wife. We need scarcely remind our readers, however, that in all these descriptions Bharat is a close imitator of Mukunda Ram.

We need not stop to narrate how the great poet and saint, Vyasa, quarrelled with Siva, and made an abortive attempt to build up a new Benares to rival the town of Benares where Siva is worshipped by all. We pass over all this, and at last find Uma on her way to the house of Bhabanand Mazumdar. She has to cross a stream, and the account she gives of herself to the ferryman is justly regarded as remarkable specimen of artistic poetry. The whole passage * may be interpreted in two different ways, and while the ferryman understands her to be the neglected wife of a Kulin Brahman

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* ঈশ্বরীরে পরিচয় কহেন ঈশ্বরী।
বুঝহ ঈশ্বরী আমি পরিচয় করি॥
বিশেষণে সবিশেষ কহিবারে পারি।
জানহ স্বামীর নাম নাহি ধরে নারী॥
গোত্রের প্রধান পিতা মুখ বংশজাত।
পরম কুলীন স্বামী বন্দ্যবংশ খ্যাত॥
পিতামহ দিলা মোরে অন্নপূর্ণা নাম।
সকলের পতি তেঁই পতি মোর বাম॥
অতিবড় বৃদ্ধপতি সিদ্ধিতে নিপুণ।
কোন গুণ নাহি তার কপালে আগুণ॥
কু কথায় পঞ্চমুখ কণ্ঠভরা বিষ।
কেবল আমার সঙ্গে দ্বন্দ অহর্নিশ।
গঙ্গানামে সতা তার তরঙ্গ এমনি।
জীবন স্বরূপা সে স্বামীর শিরোমণি॥
ভূত নাচাইয়া পতি ফেরে ঘরে ঘরে।
না মরে পাষাণ বাপ দিল হেন বরে॥
অভিমানে সমুদ্রেতে ঝাঁপ দিলা ভাই।
যে মোরে আপনা ভাবে তার ঘরে যাই॥

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who has many other wives, the goddess obscurely gives a true account of herself. Our readers will perceive that this passage is only an imitation of a similar ingenious passage in Mukunda Ram's work ; but we confess the imitation is superior to the original both in grace and in art, for Bharat is superior to Mukunda Ram in art. Uma at last reaches the house of Bhabanand Mazumdar, and from that day the house rises in glory and importance. Pratap Aditya Rai, a refractory Zemindar of Jessore Iswaripur, defies the power of the Emperor Aurungzeb, and the renowned Man Sinha is sent to quell the chief. That warrior finds some difficulty in carrying his forces over the swamps and marshes of Southern Bengal, and Bhabanand renders him signal assistance. At last a battle is fought of which we have a spirited though somewhat grotesque description, and Pratap Aditya is killed. It is when Bhabanand is accompanying Man Sinha in his marches that he narrates to the Rajput chief the story of *Bidya Sundar;* so that that story is not a portion of the main plot in any way.

In the story of Bidya Sundar the poet has tried to cast a stain on the Raj family of Burdwan, and his early disputes with that family must have impelled him to the task. The German poet Heine sings:

> Affront the living poets not,
> With weapons and flames they are furnished.

And Bharat Chandra has certainly revenged himself on the house of Burdwan with his direst weapons in his story of *Bidya Sundar.* The story is that of a princess of the Burdwan house, who falls in love with

a young prince from Southern India who has come to Burdwan in disguise. The young prince secures the services of an astute flower-woman whose character has been powerfully drawn by the poet,* although it is only an imitation, and not an improved one, of Mukunda Ram's Durbala.

The flower woman takes an epistle of love curiously woven by the foreign prince in a garland to the princess, and the effect which follows is described, as only Bharat Chandra can describe such subjects.†

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* সূর্য্য যায় অস্তগিরি আইসে যামিনী।
হেনকালে তথা এক আইলা মালিনী॥
কথায় হীরার ধার হীরা তার নাম।
দাঁত ছোলা মাজা দোলা হাস্য অবিরাম॥
গালভরা গুয়া পান পাকি মালা গলে।
কাণে কড়ি করে রাঁড়ী কথা কয় ছলে॥
চূড়া বাঁধা চুলে পরিধান সাদা শাড়ী।
ফুলের চুপড়ী কাঁকে ফিরে বাড়ী বাড়ী॥
আছিল বিস্তর ঠাট প্রথম বয়সে।
এবে বুড়া তবু কিছু গুঁড়া আছে শেষে॥
ছিটা ফোটা মন্ত্র তন্ত্র আসে কত গুলি।
চেঙ্গড়া ভুলায়ে খায় কত জানে ঠুলি॥
বাতাসে পাতিয়া ফাঁদ কন্দল ভেজায়।
পড়শী না থাকে কাছে কন্দলের দায়॥
মন্দ মন্দ গতি ঘন ঘন হাত নাড়া।
তুলিতে বৈকালে ফুল আইসে সেই পাড়া॥

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† শুন লো মালিনি কি তোর রীতি।
কিঞ্চিত হৃদয়ে না হয় ভীতি॥
এত বেলা হৈল পূজা না করি।
ক্ষুধায় তৃষ্ণায় জ্বলিয়া মরি॥

Other incidents follow, and the prince Sundar at last finds admission into the appartments of the languishing princess Bidya. The descriptions which follow are repugnant to modern taste, and have left

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বুক বাড়িয়াছে কার সোহাগে।
কালি শিখাইব মায়ের আগে॥
বুড়া হলি তবু না গেল ঠাট।
রাঁড় হৈয়ে যেন ষাঁড়ের নাট॥
রাত্রে ছিল বুঝি বঁধুর ধুম।
এতক্ষণে তেঁই ভাঙ্গিল ঘুম॥
দেখ দেখি চেয়ে কতেক বেলা।
মেয়ে পেয়ে বুঝি করিস হেলা॥
কি করিবে তোরে আমার গালি।
বাপারে বলিয়া শিখাব কালি॥
হীরা থর থর কাঁপিছে ডরে।
ঝর ঝর জল নয়নে ঝরে॥
কাঁদি কহে শুন রাজকুমারি।
ক্ষম অপরাধ আমি তোমারি॥
চিকণ গাথনে বাড়িল বেলা।
তোমার কাজে কি আমার হেলা॥
বুঝিতে নারিনু বিধির ফন্দ।
করিনু ভালরে হইল মন্দ॥
ভ্রম বাড়িবারে করিনু শ্রম।
শ্রম বৃথা হৈল ঘটিল ভ্রম॥
বিনয়েতে বিদ্যা হইল বশ।
অস্ত গেল রোষ উদয় রস॥
বিদ্যা কহে দেখি চিকণ হার।
এ গাঁথনি আই নহে তোমার॥
পুনঃ কি যৌবন ফিরি আইল।
কিবা কোন বঁধু শিখায়ে দিল॥
হীরা কহে তিতি আঁখির নীরে।
যৌবন জীবন গেলে কি ফিরে॥

a stain on Bharat Chandra's poetry and fame. Bidya's frailty is soon discovered, and the anger of the queen mother at her daughter's misconduct is powerfully described.* At last the young prince is detected and ordered

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নহে ক্ষীণ মাজা কুচ কঠোর।
কি দেখিয়া বন্ধু আসিবে মোর॥
ছাড় আই বলা জানি সকল।
গোড়ায় কাটিয়া মাথায় জল॥
বড়র পিরীতি বালির বাঁধ।
ক্ষণে হাতে দড়ি ক্ষণেকে চাঁদ॥
কোটায় কি আছে দেখ খুলিয়া।
থাকিয়া কি ফল যাই চলিয়া॥
বিদ্যা খোলে কোটা কল ছুটিল।
শর হেন ফুলশর ফুটিল॥
শিহরিল ধনি দেখিয়া কল।
শ্লোক পড়ি আরো হৈল বিকল॥
ডগ্ মগ্ তনু রসের ভরে।
ভারত হীরারে জিজ্ঞাসা করে॥

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* ক্রোধে রাণী ধায় রড়ে অঞ্চল ধরায় পড়ে
আলুথালু কবরীবন্ধন।
চক্ষু ঘুরে যেন চাক হাতনাড়া ঘন ডাক
চমকে সকল পুরজন॥
শয়নগৃহেতে রায় বৈকালিক নিদ্রা যায়
সহচরী চামর ঢুলায়।
রাণী আইল ক্রোধমনে নূপুরের ঝন্‌ঝনে
উঠে বৈসে বীরসিংহ রায়॥
রাণীর দেখিয়া হাল জিজ্ঞাসয়ে মহীপাল
কেন কেন কহ সবিশেষ।
রাণী বলে মহারাজ কি কব কহিতে লাজ
কলঙ্কে পূরিল সব দেশ॥

to be executed. But the goddess Kali interferes and saves the offender from his well-merited punishment, even as Mukunda Ram's Chandi saves Srimanta Sadagar when the King of Ceylon orders his execution.

Bharat Chandra's style is always rich, graceful and flowing. Nowhere perhaps in the entire range of Bengali literature do we find the language of poetry so rich, so graceful, so overpowering in artistic beauty as in *Bidya Sundar*. He is a complete master of the art of versification, and his appropriate phrases and rich descriptions

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ঘরে আইবড় মেয়ে কখন না দেখ চেয়ে
বিবাহের না ভাব উপায়।
অনায়াসে পারে সুখ দেখিবে নাতির মুখ
এড়াইলে ঝীর বিয়া দায়॥

কি কহিব হায় হায় জ্বলন্ত আগুনপ্রায়
আইবড় এত বড় মেয়ে।
কেমনে বিবাহ হবে লোকধর্ম্ম কিসে রবে
দিনেক দেখিতে হয় চেয়ে॥

উচ্চমাথা হৈল হেট বিদ্যার হয়েছে পেট
কালামুখ দেখাইবে কারে।
যেমন আছিল গর্ব্ব তেমনি হইল খর্ব্ব
অহঙ্কারে গেলে ছারেখারে॥

বিদ্যার কি দিব দোষ তারে বৃথা করি রোষ
বিয়া হৈলে হৈত কত ছেলে।
যৌবনে কামের জ্বালা কদিন সহিবে বালা
কথায় রাখিব কত ঠেলে॥

সদা মত্ত থাক রাগে কোন ভার নাহি লাগে
উপযুক্ত প্রহরী কোটাল।
এক ভস্ম আর ছার দোষগুণ কব কার
আমি মৈলে ফুরায় জঞ্জাল॥

have passed into bye-words. It would be difficult to overestimate the polish he has given to the Bengali language.

Another feature of Bharat Chandra's poetry is the vividness of his descriptions. As the descriptions are not always of a healthy character, the reader regrets that they are so vivid, but nevertheless confesses the power of the poet. In character-painting however, Bharat Chandra can not be compared with the great master whom he has imitated. Fullara and Khullana are women of flesh and blood with distinct characters ; in Bidya we can discover no trait of character except a capacity for voluptuous love. Durbala and Bharu Datta are powerfully-drawn pourtraits from life ; Hira Malini is an over-drawn caricature. And in all the higher qualifications of a poet, in truth, in imagination, and even in true tenderness and pathos, such as we meet with in almost every other Bengali poet, Bharat Chandra is singularly and sadly wanting.

Bharat Chandra died three years after the battle of Plassey. New actors now entered on the stage ; and new influences shaped the course of the literature of Bengal in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ram Mohan Rai and his religious reform.

1774-1833.

We now enter upon the brightest period in the annals of Bengali literature. The British Conquest of Bengal was not merely a political revolution, but brought in a greater revolution in thought and ideas, in religion and social progress. The Hindu intellect came in contact with all that is noblest and most healthy in European history and literature, and profited by it. The Hindu mind was to some extent trained under the influence of European thoughts and ideas, and benefited by it.

Towards the close of the last century, Warren Hastings compiled Hindu and Muhammadan laws for the use of courts, and associated Pandits and Maulavis with European Judges for the administration of justice. This was the first intellectual contact between Europeans and the best educated natives of Bengal. In 1799 Carey, Ward and Marshman began their missionary work in Serampore and established a Bengali press ; they printed the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and other Bengali works ; and they even started a Bengali newspaper. In 1800 Lord Wellesley established the Fort William College for the training of young civilians in the languages of India, secured the services of the most learned Pandits, and encouraged the compilation of vernacular

Rammohun Roy.

works. Sir William Jones, Colebrooke and Wilson prosecuted researches into the untrodden field of Sanscrit learning and Indian antiquities; they received the help of Hindu Pandits; and they excited in the people of India an interest in their past literature and history. David Hare, a watchmaker in Calcutta, but a man of strong common sense and philanthropy, initiated English education in Bengal, and eventually helped in the establishment of the Hindu College in 1817. Richardson and Derozio were sympathetic teachers, and inspired in the young students of the Hindu College a passionate admiration for English literature and English institutions. And lastly, the great Macaulay advocated in his historic minute that higher education should be imparted to the people of India through the English language, and Lord William Bentinck closed his beneficent administration in 1835 by ratifying this minute, and placing English education in India on a solid foundation. These are, briefly, some of the steps by which English education and European influence have spread in Bengal in the present century.

Ram Mohan Rai was the first brilliant product of European influence in India. He was born at Radhanagar in the District of Hugli in 1774, the year in which Warren Hastings became the first Governor General of India, and the Supreme Court was established. The story of the life and work of the great reformer would fill a volume; it is the story of the social, moral and intellectual progress of the Hindus during the first thirty years of this century. The great controversies in

which he engaged, first with his countrymen and then with Christian missionaries, mark the awakening of a new life in India. The pure and monotheistic Hindu faith which he preached, and the church which he established, flourish to the present day. And the numerous works which he published, in English and in Bengali, have now been compiled and placed in a collected form before his admiring countrymen. The venerable Raj Narayan Basu, himself a writer of merit and distinction, has done a signal service to the cause of Bengali literature by publishing the Bengali works of Raja Ram Mohan Rai. And later still, the English works of the great reformer have been edited and published in two stout octavo volumes by Jogendra Chandra Ghosh and Isan Chandra Basu. Our countrymen are grateful to them for this patriotic task ; but a proper biography of the great reformer has yet to be written. We can, within our limits, only narrate a few leading facts relating to his life and works.

Ram Mohan's father was Ram Kanta Rai, a petty Zemindar, who had served under the Nawabs of Murshidabad, and had witnessed their fall. And Ram Mohan's mother was Tarini Debi, a woman of great piety and remarkable firmness of character,—virtues which descended from mother to son.

Hindu boys, ambitious of obtaining employment, used to learn Bengali and Persian in those days ; and Ram Mohan acquired a knowledge of both the languages in his native village, and was then sent to Patna in his ninth year to learn Arabic. With his remarkable intelli-

gence, young Ram Mohan mastered the Persian and Arabic languages in three years, and then proceeded to Benares to study Sanscrit. This was the turning point of Ram Mohan's life ; It was in Benares that the young man not only mastered the Sanscrit language, but also acquired a knowledge of the noble tenets of the *Upanishads* and the *Vedanta*, which he made it his life's work to preach and proclaim to his countrymen.

After completing his education Ram Mohan returned to his native village, and at the early age of sixteen, in the year 1790, he wrote his famous work on the Idolatrous Religion of the Hindus (হিন্দুদিগের পৌত্তলিক ধর্ম্মপ্রণালী) which is the first literary work in Bengali prose that we know of. For while Bengali Poetry had flourished in the previous centuries, there was no such thing as a prose literature in Bengal. Raja Ram Mohan Rai is the *father of prose literature in Bengal.*

Ram Mohan's father was grieved and offended at the publication of the young reformer's early work,* and Ram Mohan had to leave his paternal home, and spent his time in travels.† It is said he penetrated into Thibet and remained there for three years, studying Buddhism.

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* We regret we do not find this first work of Ram Mohan Rai in the collection of his works published by Raj Narayan Basu.

† Ram Mohan Rai himself wrote of this in an autobiographical sketch, addressed to a friend during his stay in England :-

"When about the age of sixteen I composed a manuscript calling in question the validity of the idolatrous system of the Hindus. This, together with my known sentiments on that subject, having produced a coolness between me and my immediate kindred, I proceeded on my travels, and passed through different countries, chiefly within, but some beyond the bounds of Hindustan."

His father now relented and called back his son to his home, and Ram Mohan began the study of the English language when he was 22 years of age. With his extraordinary intellect and his keen desire for learning he not only learnt the English so as to be able to write that language correctly, fluently and forcibly, but he also acquired some knowledge of French and Latin, and it is said, of Greek and Hebrew also. At the same time he carried on controversies with Brahmans about idol-worship, the burning of widows, and similar subjects.

On the death of his father he obtained an appointment under Government, and rose to be a Dewan or Sheristadar. He was employed for 13 years (1800-1813) in the service of Government, but the routine of official work did not suit his ardent mind, and in 1814 he retired from work and settled down in Calcutta.

He was now fully equipped for the great controversies into which he entered, on the one hand with orthodox Hindus with a view to lead them to the purer faith of their ancestors, and on the other hand with Christian missionaries who wished to replace Hinduism by Christianity in India. Ram Mohan Rai selected for the modern Hindu his true position in the religious world, and he fortified that position by translations from the ancient Upanishads and other Hindu scriptures, which had so long been the monopoly of a few Pandits, and which now came like a surprise and a joy to all thoughtful and pious Hindus.

It is not our purpose to enumerate all the works which proceeded from the great reformer's pen in this,

the most eventful period of his life, but it is necessary to mention some of the more important works. Ram Mohan retired from service and settled down in Calcutta, not to rest but to work, and works proceeded from his fertile pen with a rapidity which amazed and bewildered his friends and opponents alike. In 1815, appeared his Bengali rendering of *Vedanta* philosophy, and in the following year he published *Vedanta Sara* and an abridgment in English of that system of philosophy. The spirit, which inspired the pious and indomitable worker is well set forth in the concluding lines of his introduction to this work,—lines which should live in the memory of his countrymen as long as they continue to appreciate courage, honesty of purpose and devotion to duty.

"By taking the path which conscience and sincerity direct, I, born a Brahman, have exposed myself to the complainings and reproaches, even of some of my relations, whose prejudices are strong, and whose temporal advantage depends upon the present system. But these, however accumulated, I can tranquilly bear, trusting that a day will arrive, when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice, perhaps acknowledged with gratitude. At any rate, whatever men may say, I cannot be deprived of this consolation: my motives are acceptable to that **Being** who beholds in secret and compensates openly."

The 1816 and 1817, he translated several *Upanishads* into Bengali and into English, and in the three following years he published his powerful and famous discourses in Bengali and in English, condemning the burning of widows. As a specimen of Ram Mohan Rai's Bengali prose style, we quote the concluding passage from the

first of these essays.* Our readers will see that Bengali prose had not yet received the purity and grace which

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প্রবর্ত্তক।—এরূপ সহমরণে ও অনুমরণে পাপই হউক কিম্বা যাহা হউক আমরা এ ব্যবহারকে নিবর্ত্ত করিতে দিব না ইহার নিবৃত্তি হইলে হঠাৎ লৌকিক এক আশঙ্কা আছে যে স্বামির মৃত্যু হইলে স্ত্রী সহগমন না করিয়া বিধবা অবস্থায় রহিলে তাহার ব্যভিচার হইবার সম্ভাবনা থাকে কিন্তু সহমরণ করিলে এ আশঙ্কা থাকে না জ্ঞাতি কুটুম্ব সকলেই নিঃশঙ্ক হইয়া থাকেন এবং পতিও যদি জীবৎকালে জানিতে পারে তবে তাহারো মনে স্ত্রী ঘটিত কলঙ্কের কোনো চিন্তা হয় না।

নিবর্ত্তক।—কেবল ভাবি আশঙ্কাকে দূর করিবার নিমিত্তে এরূপ স্ত্রী বধে পাপ জানিয়াও নির্দ্দয় হইয়া জ্ঞান পূর্ব্বক প্রবর্ত্ত হইতেছে তবে ইহাতে আমরা কি করিতে পারি কিন্তু ব্যভিচারের আশঙ্কা পতি বর্ত্তমান থাকিতেই বা কোন্ না আছে বিশেষত পতি দূর দেশে বহুকাল থাকিলে ঐ আশঙ্কার সম্ভাবনা কেন না থাকে অতএব সে আশঙ্কা নিবৃত্তির উপায় কি করিয়াছ॥

প্রবর্ত্তক।—স্বামি বর্ত্তমানে ও অবর্ত্তমানে অনেক প্রভেদ আছে যে হেতু স্বামি বর্ত্তমান থাকিলে নিকটেই থাকুন কিম্বা দূরদেশেই থাকুন স্ত্রী সর্ব্বদা স্বামির শাসনেই থাকে নিশঃঙ্ক হইতে পারে না স্বামির মৃত্যু হইলে পর সেরূপ শাসন থাকে না সুতরাং নিঃশঙ্ক হয়॥

নিবর্ত্তক।—যে শাস্ত্রানুসারে পতি বর্ত্তমানে পতির শাসনে স্ত্রীকে থাকিতে হয় সেই শাস্ত্রেই লিখেন পতি মরিলে পতি কুলে তাহার অভাবে পিতৃকুলে তাঁহাদের শাসনে বিধবা থাকিবেক এধর্ম্ম রক্ষাতে দেশাধিপতিকে নিয়ন্তা করিয়া শাস্ত্রে কহিয়াছেন তবে স্বামি বর্ত্তমান থাকিলে কি তাহার অবর্ত্তমানে স্বামি প্রভৃতির শাসন ত্যাগ ও ব্যভিচারের সম্ভাবনা কদাপি নিবৃত্তি হইতে পারে না যে হেতু অনেক অনেক স্থানে প্রত্যক্ষ দেখিতেছ যে স্বামি বর্ত্তমান থাকিতেও তাহার শাসনে স্ত্রী না থাকিয়া স্বতন্ত্রা হইতেছে। কায়মন বাক্য জন্য দুষ্কর্ম্ম হইতে নিবর্ত্ত করিবার কারণ শাসন মাত্র হইতে পারে না কিন্তু জ্ঞানের উপদেশ ঈশ্বরের ভয় দুষ্কর্ম্ম হইতে কি স্ত্রীকে কি পুরুষকে নিবর্ত্ত করায় ইহা শাস্ত্রেও প্রত্যক্ষ দেখিতেছি॥

প্রবর্ত্তক।—তুমি আমাদিগ্যে পুনঃ পুনঃ কহিতেছ যে নির্দ্দয়তা করিয়া আমরা স্ত্রীবধে প্রবর্ত্ত হই এ অতি অযোগ্য যে হেতু শ্রুতি স্মৃতিতে সর্ব্বদা কহিতেছেন যে দয়া সকল ধর্ম্মের মূল হয় এবং অতিথি সেবাদি পরম্পরা ব্যবহারের দ্বারা আমাদের দয়াবত্তা সর্ব্বত্র প্রকাশ আছে।

subsequent writers have imparted to it. But Ram Mohan's rugged and well-reasoned style suited the great task he set before himself,—to battle single-handed against a host of unreasoning antagonists, and to expose evil customs and hurtful practices. Raja Radha Kanta Deb headed the orthodox party in those days, defended existing practices, and stood forth against all reform. It was a curious spectacle, that of a Brahman seeking to remove the abuses of modern Hinduism, and a Kayastha standing forth as their champion and defender! The whole orthodox party gathered round Raja Radha Kanta, angry Pandits indulged in violent attacks and vituperation, and for a time Ram Mohan's life was in danger, and he went about with a guard. But the great and undaunted reformer never swerved one inch from the path he had chosen, and he triumphed over all opposition.

নিবর্ত্তক।—অন্য অন্য বিষয়ে তোমাদের দয়ার বাহুল্য আছে এ যথার্থ বটে কিন্তু বালক কাল অবধি আপন আপন প্রাচীন লোকের এবং প্রতিবাসির ও অন্য অন্য গ্রামস্থ লোকের দ্বারা জ্ঞান পূর্ব্বক স্ত্রীদাহ পুনঃ পুনঃ দেখিবাতে এবং দাহ কালীন স্ত্রীলোকের কাতরতায় নিষ্ঠুর থাকাতে তোমাদের বিরুদ্ধ সংস্কার জন্মে এই নিমিত্ত কি স্ত্রীর কি পুরুষের মরণ কালীন কাতরতাতে তোমাদের দয়া জন্মে না যেমন শাক্তদের বাল্যাবধি ছাগ মহিষাদি হনন পুনঃ পুনঃ দেখিবার দ্বারা ছাগ মহিষাদির বধ কালীন কাতরতাতে দয়া জন্মে না কিন্তু বৈষ্ণবদের অত্যন্ত দয়া হয়॥

প্রবর্ত্তক।—তুমি যাহা যাহা কহিলে তাহা আমি বিশেষ মতে বিবেচনা করিব॥

নিবর্ত্তক।—এ অতি আহ্লাদের বিষয় যে এখন তুমি এবিষয়ের বিবেচনা করিতে প্রবর্ত্ত হইলে পক্ষপাত পরিত্যাগ করিয়া শাস্ত্র বিবেচনা করিলে যাহা শাস্ত্র সিদ্ধ হয় তাহার অবশ্য নিশ্চয় হইতে পারিবেক এবং এরূপ স্ত্রীবধ জন্য পাপ হইতে দেশের অনিষ্ট ও তিরস্কার আর হইবেক না ইতি॥

The invincible combatant next turned his arms against the Christian missionaries of Serampore. There is a history connected with his *Precepts of Jesus* and his three *Appeals* which is worth recording. These essays were published between 1820 and 1823, and occupy over five hundred closely printed octavo pages of Ram Mohan's English works. From early youth, Ram Mohan preached monotheism and a pure system of morality, and he was attracted by the teachings of Christ when he came in contact with Christians. In 1820, he published in Sanskrit and in Bengali the *Precepts of Jesus*, separating them "from the abstruse doctrines and miraculous relations of the New Testament." This gave offence to the Serampore missionaries, and a reply appeared in the *Friend of India*, the editor Dr. Marshman adding his own observation, and calling Ram Mohan a "heathen."

Ram Mohan published his first and second *Appeals*, in defence of his *Precepts*, and printed them at the Baptist Mission Press, and Dr. Marshman successively replied to them. But when Ram Mohan came forward with his third and *Final Appeal*, the Baptist Mission Press refused to print it. Ram Mohan was not to be baffled; he established a press of his own, and published his *Final Appeal* with its formidable array of Hebrew and Greek quotations. Dr. Marshman republished his replies in London, and the Unitarian Society there published Ram Mohan's *Appeals* in 1824, and they were republished in America, in 1828.

The remarkable ability and learning displayed by

Ram Mohan were at once acknowledged in Europe and in America. Dr. Carpenter, commenting on the second *Appeal* said, "that the excellent author is distinguished by the closeness of his reasoning, the critical accuracy of his scriptural knowledge, the comprehensiveness of his investigations, the judiciousness of his arrangements, the lucid statements of his opinions, and the acuteness and skill with which he controverts the positions of his opponents."

But it was not the task of controverting the opinions of his opponents, it was not the task of *destruction*, which Ram Mohan set before himself as the great work of his life. It was the task of *construction*, it was the task of leading back his countrymen to the pure religion of the *Upanishads* and the *Vedanta*, which he set before himself. As early as 1814, immediately after his retirement from the service of Government, Ram Mohan founded the *Atmiya Sabha* for the worship of the One Invisible God of the Upanishads. Later on, he established the *Veda Mandir* for the study of the Vedas. Many pious and prayerful men gathered round him, and the cause of Hindu monotheism prospered in spite of all opposition. And at last, in 1828, he established the Brahma Samaj, the crowning work of his life, "for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable, Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe." Dwarka Nath Tagore and Prasanna Kumar Tagore* helped him, and stood by him in this noble work, and Ram Chandra

* The proper spelling of the name is *Thakur;* but we write it as the members of this cultured family write their names.

Vidyabagis was the minister of the Church from the commencement. It was this minister who kept up the church after Ram Mohan's death, until Dwarka Nath's son Devendra nath Tagore accepted the religion of the Brahma Samaj and became its stay and support.

We have so long spoken of Ram Mohan's labours in the cause of religion, for his fame rests mainly on his religious reform. But his keen intellect and encyclopædic mind grasped every question which attracted public attention, and in every question his vast energies were enlisted in the cause of reform. Ram Mohan Rai and David Hare and Sir Edward Hyde East were the prime movers in the founding of the Hindu College in 1817. In 1823 Ram Mohan addressed a letter to Lord Amherst then Governor General, which almost foreshadows Lord Macaulay's famous minute on the merits of Sanscrit and English education.* And in the same year we find him, along with Dwarka Nath Tagore

*We quote the concluding passages of Ram Mohan's letter here. "The Sanscrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe, and providing a College furnished with necessary books, instruments, and other apparatus.

In presenting this subject to your Lordship, I conceive myself discharging a solemn duty which I owe to my countrymen, and also to that enlightened sovereign and legislature which have extended their benevolent care to this distant land, actuated by a desire to improve the inhabitants, and therefore humbly trust you will excuse the liberty I have taken in thus expressing my sentiments to your Lordship."

and Prasanna Kumar Tagore, appealing to the Supreme Court and then to the throne of England for the liberty of the Press, and thus starting that system of constitutional agitation for political rights which his countrymen have learned to value so much in the present day.

Ram Mohan also wrote on the rights of Hindu females in ancient times, and on other legal questions, but it was his prolonged endeavours to abolish the rite of *Sati* which brought him to prominent notice with the rulers of the country. We have seen that he began the controversy in 1818, and after twelve years of persistent agitation he had the satisfaction of witnessing the triumph of the holy and righteous cause.*

It was thus that Ram Mohan Rai ardently and enthu-

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*Raja Radha Kanta Deb, as the leader of the orthodox community, opposed the abolition of *Sati*. Ram Mohan Rai and his party supported Government on this memorable occasion, and presented an address to Lord William Bentinck after he had suppressed the cruel rite. The reply of the Governor General to this address is worth quoting.

"It is very satisfactory for me to find that, according to the opinions of so many respectable and intelligent Hindus, the practice which has recently been prohibited, not only was not required by the rules of their religion, but was at variance with those writings which they deem to be of the greatest force and authority. Nothing but a reluctance to inflict punishment for acts which might be conscientiously believed to be enjoined by religious precepts, could have induced the British Government at any time to permit, within territories under its protection, an usage so violently opposed to the best feelings of human nature. Those who present this address are right in supposing that by every nation in the world, except the Hindus themselves, this part of their customs has always been made a reproach against them, and nothing so strangely contrasted with the better features of their own national character, so inconsistent with the affections which unite families, so destructive of the moral principles on which society is founded, has ever subsisted amongst a people in other respects so civilized. I trust that the reproach is removed for ever; and I feel a sincere pleasure in

siastically supported every movement towards reform and towards the regeneration of his country. Never since the days of Chaitanya has Bengal witnessed such intense agitation as during the first quarter of this century. Never has one man attempted and achieved more for his country than Ram Mohan Rai.

The Emperor of Delhi wished to send an agent to England to represent some of his grievances, and he chose Ram Mohan as his agent, and bestowed on him the title of Raja. Raja Ram Mohan had always eagerly wished to visit the western world and gladly seized this opportunity, and he left for Europe in 1830.

His stay in England brought him no rest. His fame had preceded him, and Ram Mohan Rai was requested to give his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Judicial and Revenue Systems of India. The masterly essay which he wrote on this subject occupies over a hundered pages of his collected English works. He was also examined on the condition of the native inhabitants of India, and he wrote on the subject of European Colonization of India.

One of his great objects in proceeding to Europe however was to support the abolition of the rite of *Sati* in the House of Commons. He presented the petitions which he had brought with him to the House of Commons and the House of Lords in person, and had the satisfaction of being present when the appeal

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thinking that the Hindus will thereby be exalted in the estimation of mankind to an extent in some degree proportioned to the repugnance which was felt for the usage which has now ceased."

against the abolition of *Sati* was rejected on the 11th of July, 1832.

Ram Mohan's great acquirements and noble work became known all over England and in other countries of Europe, and his presence was courted in the highest circles and by men of learning. The poet Campbell wrote of him, the antiquarian Rosen consulted him when he was translating the Rig Veda, and the greatest living philosopher of England, Jeremy Bentham, received him with open arms, and addressed him as "*Intensely admired and dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind.*"*

After a residence of three years in Europe, Raja Ram Mohan Rai died on the 27th September 1833, and his remains were interred in Bristol. A tomb was subsequently erected there by his friend and distinguished countryman Dwarka Nath Tagore.

We have spoken of Ram Mohan's work in the formation of Bengali prose. Scarcely less eminent are his services in lyrical verse. The reader will scarcely suspect the enthusiastic reformer to be the author of some of the finest and noblest songs which the Bengali language has known.† But the reformer had a heart

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*"Your works" wrote Bentham to Ram Mohan, "are made known to me by a book in which I read a style which, but for the name of a Hindu, I should certainly have ascribed to the pen of a superiorly educated and instructed Englishman." And in the same letter, while praising James Mill's great work on the History of India, Bentham remarked : "though as to style I wish I could with truth and sincerity pronounce it equal to yours."

† One or two specimens are given here :

মনে স্থির করিয়াছ চিরদিন কি সুখে যাবে।
জীবন যৌবন ধন মান রবে সমভাবে॥

full of tenderness, piety and genuine feeling; and his songs excite the noblest emotions of the human soul. After a lapse of seventy years, the songs of Ram Mohan Rai are still sung in every home in Bengal.

এই আশা তরুতলে বসিয়াছ কুতূহলে।
বিষয় করিয়া কোলে জান না ত্যজিতে হবে॥
অরে মন শুন সার দিবা অন্তে অন্ধকার।
সুখান্তে দুঃখেরই ভার বহিতে হবে॥
অতএব অবধান যে অবধি থাকে প্রাণ।
ব্রহ্মে কর সমাধান নির্ম্মল আনন্দ পাবে॥

মনে কর শেষের সে দিন ভয়ঙ্কর।
অন্যে বাক্য কবে কিন্তু তুমি রবে নিরুত্তর॥
যার প্রতি যত মায়া কিবা পুত্র কিবা জায়া।
তার মুখ চেয়ে তত হইবে কাতর॥
গৃহে হায় হায় শব্দ সম্মুখে স্বজন স্তব্ধ।
দৃষ্টিহীন নাড়ীক্ষীণ হিম কলেবর॥
অতএব সাবধান ত্যজ দম্ভ অভিমান।
বৈরাগ্য অভ্যাস কর সত্যেতে নির্ভর॥

CHAPTER XIV.

Iswar Chandra Gupta and his Satires.

1809-1858.

Iswar Chandra Gupta was born in the village of Kanchrapara in 1809, and is the earliest Bengali poet of the present century. His poetry forms a connecting link between the old school of Mukunda Ram and Bharat Chandra and the new school of Madhu Sudan and Hem Chandra. Born when the Hindu society was in a transition state, and naturally endowed with a keen humour, he freely ridiculed much that was false and hollow, and also much that was earnest and true, in the movements of his time. As a poet Iswar Chandra does not rank very high, as a satirist he stands first among the writers of Bengal.

Iswar Chandra's poems have lately been published in a collected form with a memoir of the poet's life by the late Bankim Chandra Chatterjea. This work will be our guide in the present chapter.

Iswar Chandra's father was of humble means, and was employed on a pay of eight Rupees a month in a factory close to his native village. Iswar sometimes lived in his village, and sometimes in Calcutta in the house of his maternal uncle. He lost his mother at

an early age, and his father married again, much to the disgust of young Iswar. After this event Iswar lived mostly in Calcutta, in the house of his maternal uncle.

The education of the future poet was neglected; he acquired a knowledge of Bengali in Patshalas, and also learnt a little English. He frequented the house of the Tagore family in Pathuriaghata, and gradually rose to distinction under the patronage of that family. He was married at the age of 15, against his wishes as we are informed, and domestic bliss was not in store for the young pair.

Under the patronage and with the help of the Tagore family, Iswar Chandra started a journal called *Sambad Prabhakar* in 1830, and the talent and genius of the young editor soon attracted the attention of the literary world to the journal. Among the writers in this journal we see the names of the most distinguished men of the times, like Raja Radha Kanta Deb, Ram Kamal Sen, Hara Kumar Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Pandit Jay Gopal Tarkalankar, Pandit Prem Chand Tarkabagish and others.

Iswar Chandra's productions appeared in prose and verse in this journal. He was an imitator of Bharat Chandra's style, but was not a mere imitator. His keen powers of satire are his own, and his verses on society and life and on the events which were transpiring around him, written in a free and easy style, are among the happiest pieces in their way in the whole range of Bengali

literature.* The poetry is not of a very high order, but Iswar Chandra's witty and flowing verse, his satirical hits,

* A few instances will suffice.

ইংরাজী নববর্ষ।

গোরার দঙ্গলে গিয়া কথা কহ হেঁসে।
ঠেস মেরে বসো গিয়া বিবিদের ঘেঁসে॥
রাঙ্গা মুখ দেখে বাবা টেনে লও হ্যাম্।
ডোণ্ট কেয়ার হিন্দুয়ানী ড্যাম ড্যাম ড্যাম॥
পিঁড়ি পেতে ঝুরো লুসে মিছে ধরি নেম।
মিসে নাহি মিশ খায় কিসে হবে ফেম॥
সাড়ী পরা এলোচুল আমাদের মেম।
বেলাক নেটিব লেডি শেম শেম শেম॥
সিন্দুরের বিন্দু সহ কপালেতে উল্কি।
নসী, জশী, ক্ষেমী, বামী, রামী শ্যামী, গুল্কি॥
ঘরে থেকে চিরকাল পায় মহা দুখ।
কখনও দেখেনা পর পুরুষের মুখ॥
এই রূপে হিন্দু বামা শুদ্ধাচারে রেকে।
না পায় সুখের আলো অন্ধকারে থেকে॥
কোথায় নেটিব লেডি বলি শুন সবে।
পশুর স্বভাবে আর কত কাল রবে॥
ধন্য রে বোতলবাসি ধন্য লাল জল।
ধন্য ধন্য বিলাতের সভ্যতার বল।

পৌষপার্ব্বন।

তোমার কি ঘর পানে কিছু নাই টান।
হাবাতের হাতে যায় অভাগীর প্রাণ॥
কি বলিব বাপ মায়ে কেন দিল বিয়ে।
এক দিন সুখ নাই ঘর কন্না নিয়ে॥
কোনও দিন না করিলে সংসারের ক্রিয়ে।
দিবানিশি ফেরো শুধু গোঁপে তেল দিয়ে॥

and his vivid descriptions were learnt by rote by a large circle of readers, and were the theme of never-

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সবে মাত্র দুই গাছা খাড়ু ছিল হাতে।
তাহাও দিয়াছি বাঁধা মেয়েটীর ভাতে॥
সুদে সুদে বেড়ে গেল কে করে খালাস।
বাঁচিবার সাধ নাই মলেই খালাস॥
রাত্রি দিন খেটে মরি এক সন্ধ্যা খেয়ে।
এত জ্বালা সহ্য করি আমি যাই মেয়ে॥
এই রূপ প্রতি ঘরে দৃশ্য মনোহর।
গিন্নীর কাঁড়ুনী হয় কর্ত্তার উপর॥
মাগীদের নাহি আর তিন রাত্রি ঘুম।
গড়াগড়ি ছড়াছড়ি রন্ধনের ধূম॥
সাবকাশ নাই মাত্র এল চুল বাঁধে।
ডাল ঝোল মাচ ভাত রাশি রাশি রাঁধে॥
কত তার কাঁচা থাকে কত যায় পুড়ে।
সাধে রাঁধে পরমান্ন নলেনের গুড়ে॥
বধূর রন্ধনে যদি যায় তাহা এঁকে।
শাশুড়ী ননদ কত কথা কয় বেঁকে॥
হ্যাঁলা বৌ কি করিলি দেখে মন চটে।
এই রান্না শিখেছিস্ মায়ের নিকটে॥
সাত জন্ম ভাত বিনা যদি মরি দুখে।
তথাচ এমন রান্না নাহি দিই মুখে॥
বধূর মধুর খনি মুখ শতদল।
সলিল ভাসিয়া যায় চক্ষু ছল ছল॥
আহা তার হাহাকার বুঝিবার নয়।
ফুটিতে না পারে কিছু মনে মনে রয়॥
ভাগ্যফলে রান্না সব ভাল হয় যাঁর।
ঠ্যাকারেতে মাটিতে পা নাহি পড়ে তাঁর॥
হাসি হাসি মুখ খানি অপরূপ আড়া।
বেঁকে বেঁকে যান গিন্নী দিয়ে নথ নাড়া॥
হ্যাঁগা দিদি এই শাক রাঁধিয়াছি রেতে।
মাথা খাও সত্তি বল, ভাল লাগে খেতে?

ending admiration. No renowned poet appeared in Bengal in the first half of the present century, and Iswar

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দিব্বি দিস্ কেন বোন্ হেন কথা কয়ে?
ষাট্ ষাট বেঁচে থাক জন্ম এয়ো হয়ে॥
পুরুষেরা ভাল সব বলিয়াছে খেয়ে।
ভাল রান্না রেঁধেছিস ধন্য তুই মেয়ে॥

ছদ্ম মিশনরী।

মূর্খ হয়ে ঘরে থাক ধর্ম্মপথ ধরে।
কায নাই ইস্কুলেতে লেখা পড়া করে॥
হ্যাদেরে ছেলের বাপ মন্দ বড় কাল।
আপন আপন ছেলে সামাল সামাল॥
মিষ্টভাষী শুভ্রাকার মিশনরি যত।
আমাদের পক্ষে তাঁরা দয়াধর্ম্মহত॥
পিতার সুখের নিধি তনয় রতন।
কিছু নাহি বুঝে তার মনের মতন॥
শূন্য করি জননীর হৃদয় ভাণ্ডার।
হরণ করিয়া লয় সাধের কুমার॥
বাক্যের কুহক যোগে ঈশুমন্ত্র ছেড়ে।
যুবতীর বুক চিরে পতি লয় কেড়ে॥
কামিনীর কোল শূন্য ক্ষুণ্ণ মন তায়।
এ খেদ কহিব কারে হায় হায় হায়॥
বিদ্যাদান ছল করি মিশনরি ডব।
পাতিয়াছে ভাল এক বিধর্ম্মের টব॥

পাঁঠা।

রসভরা রসময় রসের ছাগল।
তোমার কারণে আমি হয়েছি পাগল।

Chandra was the reigning king of the literary world in his day. But the king had his opponents! One Gauri Sankar Bhattacharja started a rival paper, and a battle of verse was waged for some time, marked more by abuse than by wit!

স্বর্ণ কুকী রত্ন গর্ভা জননী তোমার।
উদরে তোমায় ধরে ধন্য গুণ তার॥
তুমি যার পেটে যাও সেই পুণ্যবান্।
সাধু সাধু সাধু তুমি ছাগীর সন্তান॥
ত্রিতাপেতে তরে লোক তব নাম নিয়া।
বাঁচালে দক্ষের প্রাণ নিজ মুণ্ড দিয়া॥
চাঁদ মুখে চাপ দাড়ি গালে নাই গোঁপ।
শৃঙ্গ খাড়া ছাড়া ছাড়া লোমে লোমে থোপ॥

নীলকরদিগের অত্যাচার।

হোলে নীল করদের অনররি মাজিষ্টরি ভার!
কুইন মা, মা, মাগো
হোলে নীল করদের অনররি মেজিষ্টরি ভার।
পড়েছে সব পাথর বক্ষে অভাগা প্রজার পক্ষে
বিচারে রক্ষে নাই কো আর।
নীলকরের হদ্দ নীলে নীলে নিলে সব নিলে
দেশে উঠেছে এই ভাষ যত প্রজার সর্ব্বনাশ।
কুঠীয়াল বিচারকারী লাঠিয়াল সহকারী
বানরের হাতে হোল কালের খস্তা
লোস্তা জলে চাষ।
হোলো ডাইনের কোলে ছেলে সোপা
চিলের বাসায় মাচ।
হবে বাঘের হাতে ছাগের রক্ষে
শুনেনি কেউ শুনবে না॥

In course of time, Iswar Chandra started the monthly *Prabhakar*, teeming with his inexhaustible verse, and also with prose compositions. He wrote the lives of the older Bengali poets, Mukunda Ram, Bharat Chandra, Ram Prasad and others in this journal, and this was the first attempt to compile the biographies of our old writers. The monthly *Prabhakar* became a power in the land, and young writers of talent and genius like Dina Bandhu Mitra and Bankim Chandra, who subsequently rose to fame and distinction, served their first apprenticeship under Iswar Chandra Gupta in the monthly *Prabhakar*.

Iswar Chandra also took part in recitations and musical performances, (পাচালী, হাফ আক্‌ড়াই &c.), which were in fashion in his day, and his ready wit and ready

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মুদকীর যুদ্ধ।

চেগেছে বিষম যুদ্ধ শীকগণ সঙ্গে।
রেগেছে ইংরেজ লোক রণ রস রঙ্গে॥
সেজেছে অগণ্য সৈন্য কি কব বিস্তার।
বেজেছে জয়ের ডঙ্কা নাহিক নিস্তার॥
বেড়েছে বৃটিশ সেনা, সংখ্যা শত শত।
বেড়েছে প্রাণের মায়া যুদ্ধে হয়ে রত॥
ঘেরেছে সমর স্থল লয়ে নিজ দল।
সেরেছে এবার শীকে, হইয়া প্রবল॥
মেরেছে বিপক্ষগণে মুদকীর রণে।
হেরেছে সকল শত্রু গোরাদের সনে।
ভেগেছে সম্মুখ যুদ্ধে নদী পার হয়ে।
মেগেছে আশ্রয় পুন মিত্রভাব লয়ে॥

verse were much appreciated. In his last days he turned to more serious works, mostly translations from the Sanscrit like his *Prabodha Prabhakar* and *Bodhendu Bikas*. The extract which we give below* from *Bodhendu Bikas* is a fair specimen of Iswar Chandra's

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* হে জীব সকল। এই সংসারকে অনিত্য জ্ঞান করিয়া নিয়তই মরণকে স্মরণ কর,—মনের সকল অভিমান হরণ কর,—সন্তোষকে মনের মন্দিরে বরণ কর,—কেবল আনন্দ দ্বীপে চরণ কর,—জীবন জীবনবিম্ব-বৎ, নিশ্বাসের প্রতি বিশ্বাস নাই, এখনই বিনাশ হইবে, অতএব যত পার ততই সৎকার্য্য সাধন কর,—ইন্দ্রিয়গণের বশীভূত হইয়া সৎকার্য্যের সৎকার্য্য করা উচিত হয় না, পরম প্রেমের প্রেমিক হও, সকলের প্রিয় হইয়া প্রেম পাশে সকলকে বদ্ধ কর। এই জগতীবাসে কে তোমার শত্রু আছে? তুমি কাহাকে শত্রু জ্ঞান কর? তুমি বিবেচনা দোষে আপনিই আপনার শত্রু হইতেছ, কারণ দেহের কারণ না জানিয়া দেহেতে আত্মবোধ করত ঘোরতর অভিমান বশতঃ কেবল রিপু দিগের চরিতার্থ করিতেছে।—এই অভিমান, এই অহঙ্কার, এই দম্ভ ইহারা তোমার যত শত্রু আর কেহই নাই।—যদি এই রিপু মণ্ডিত বপুরাজ্য পারিতোষিক স্বরূপ তোমার চিরপ্রাপ্ত ধন হইত, তবে অহঙ্কার একদিন শোভা পাইত।—মৃত্যু প্রতিক্ষণেই নিজ নিকটে আহ্বান করিতেছে, এখনি মৃত্যুঞ্জয়ের চরণ-শরণ লও।

জগতের শোভা দর্শন কর,—কি বিনোদ-ব্যাপার-ব্যূহ বিলোকিত হইতেছে। কিন্তু এই অদ্ভুত ভূতের ব্যাপার দেখিতে দেখিতে ভূতে অভিভূত হওয়া উচিত হয় না। যিনি সকল ভূতের কর্ত্তা, ভূতাতিত ভূতনাথ তাহারই ভবে অভিভূত হও। রত্নাকর সমুদ্রে এবং এই রত্নময়ী বসুধা-গর্ভে যে সকল রত্নরাজী রাজীত আছে, তৎসমূহ একত্র করিয়া সম্ভোগ করিলেও ক্ষণমাত্র যথার্থ সুখের সঞ্চার হইতে পারে না। এই বিচিত্র গগন ক্ষেত্র বিরাজিত চন্দ্র, সূর্য্য, বায়ু, এবং বারি প্রভৃতি কি কখনো তোমাকে চিরসুখে সুখী করিতে পারে? কেননা মানব কৃত কার্য্য জনীত অথবা প্রাকৃতিক-সুখকে প্রকৃত সুখের মধ্যেই গননা করা যায় না, যেহেতু এই সমস্ত সুখ অবিনাশী এবং অনন্ত নহে, ক্ষণে, ক্ষণেই বিনষ্ট হইতেছে, অথচ ইহাতে কেবল দুঃখের অংশই অধিক, ঐ সমুদয় অনিত্য সুখের বিচ্ছেদকালীন যেরূপ দুঃখের উদয় হয়, তাহা শরীর এবং মনের পক্ষে কত

prose style. Our readers will observe that Bengali prose was not yet perfect. Iswar Chandra's prose is not as happy and natural as his poetry, but is artificial and alliterative, and somewhat grotesque.

Minor Poets.

Among the minor poets who flourished in the first half of this century, one at least deserves mention. Madan Mohan Tarkalankar was a contemporary of Iswar Chandra. He was born in 1815, and was for sometime Professor in the Sanscrit College, and subsequently became a Judge-Pandit and then a Deputy Collector. He died in 1858, *i. e.* in the same year with Iswar Chandra Gupta. His *Rasa Tarangini* is a translation into ornate and musical Bengali verse of some Sanscrit verses on love ; and his *Vasavadatta* is a Bengali adaptation of the well-known Sanscrit novel of that name by Subandhu.

কষ্টদায়ক বিবেচনা কর। হে মানব। বিশেষ প্রণিধান পূর্ব্বক এই অসার সংসারে সংশয় সম্বন্ধীয় সুখের আশা পরিহার কর। শুদ্ধ শুদ্ধচিত্তে এক অক্ষরে অখণ্ড অনন্ত, সুখ সম্ভোগ কর, যাহার সহিত দুঃখের কিছুমাত্র সংস্রব নাই।

Some of Iswar Chandra's compound words are virtually Sanskrit compounds. The following passage from *Bodhendu Bikas* will illustrate this.

কেন না তুমি এইকালে নব নব নয়নবল্লভপল্লব মঞ্জরীমণ্ডলমণ্ডিত নব নব সুচারুসুন্দর সুরভিফুল্লফুলদলসুশোভিত মৃদু মৃদু মলয়ানিলসেবিত মধুপানমত্ত মধুকর নিকরগুঞ্জিত কোকিলকুল কলকূজিত কমনীয় কুঞ্জ কাননে কুটিলকুন্তলা কুরঙ্গাক্ষী কুলকামিনী কুলকর সঞ্চারণ পুরঃসর বিহার সুখে সুখী হইতে ইচ্ছা কর।

CHAPTER XV.

Akhay Kumar Datta.

1820-1886.

Akhay Kumar Datta and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar were the true successors of Raja Ram Mohan Rai. They inherited his strong enthusiasm for social reform and devoted their lives to the good of their country. And they also perfected the literary prose style of Bengal which was first rudely shaped by Raja Ram Mohan Rai.

Both Akhay Kumar and Iswar Chandra were born in 1820, Akhay Kumar being senior by two months. Both set before themselves the same lofty purpose, *viz.* the moral instruction of the people and the reform of social abuses. Both contributed to the formation of a chaste and dignified literary prose style in Bengali. And both lived to a ripe old age, and have lately been taken away from us, honored and lamented by the nation. A meritorious biography of Akhay Kumar has been compiled by Mahendra Nath Vidyanidhi, and an equally meritorious life of Vidyasagar has been compiled by Chandi Charan Banerjea. We cordially acknowledge our indebtedness to both these industrious writers.

Akhay Kumar was born in Chupi, near Nabadwip, and was the son of Pitambar Datta. His mother was Dayamayi, a woman who was distinguished alike by her

remarkable intelligence and her natural piety ; and like Ram Mohan Rai, Akhay Kumar inherited the virtues of his mother. He learned Bengali in his village Patshala and also picked up a knowledge of Persian ; and at the age of ten he came to Kidderpore near Calcutta, where his father was staying.

The story of the early struggles of Akhay Kumar to acquire sound knowledge through the English language is among the most touching episodes of his instructive life. A copy of Pearson's Dialogues on Geography and Astronomy, in English and Bengali, fell into his hands, and the young boy of ten read with intense interest and delight the account of clouds, rain, lightning and thunder, in the Bengali version. His eager mind was filled with a desire to know more of the secrets and laws of nature, and at this early age Akhay Kumar determined to learn English in order to acquire such knowledge.

After studying with private teachers for some years to little purpose, the enthusiastic boy got himself admitted in a Missionary school at Kidderpur. His father was alarmed, for a Missionary school was, in those days, looked upon with dread. It was at last settled that the intractable boy would reside with a cousin in Calcutta, and attend the Oriental Seminary, a Hindu institution where English was taught. Akhay Kumar was admitted there at the age of sixteen, and virtually commenced his English education at this age ; the knowledge of English which he had been able to acquire before this was but nominal.

But poor Akhay Kumar's difficulties were not yet at an end. He could pay no schooling fees for the period of one year, and the penniless boy came to the proprietor, Gaur Mohan Adhya, with tears in his eyes, and asked permission to leave the school, as he could not afford to pay. Gaur Mohan had marked the intelligence and the uprightness of the boy, he took pity on him, and permitted him to pursue his studies without payment of fees.

But a long course of instruction in this institution was not in store for Akhay Kumar. On the death of his father at Benares, he had to leave the school after remaining there for less then three years. His keen desire for knowledge however continued unabated, the study of Natural Science had special attraction for him, and he continued the study after leaving school. And at the age of twenty he began to learn Sanscrit, the knowledge of which befitted him for the great task of his life, the development of Bengali prose literature.

Iswar Chandra Gupta was then the king of the literary world in Bengal, and Akhay Kumar became acquainted with him. On one occasion, Iswar Chandra asked Akhay to translate an article which had appeared in an English daily paper. "But I have never composed anything in Bengali prose," said young Akhay, "how can I translate this"? With his usual kindness for talented young men, the veteran Iswar Chandra encouraged him in the task, and admired his performance when it was done. Such was Akhay Kumar's initiation

into the status of a Bengali writer, and henceforth he began to compose articles for the *Prabhakar*.

But such compositions did not pay, and Akhay Kumar had now to seek for means of livelihood. Various friends gave him various advices. One advised him to be a Daroga, and Akhay Kumar seriously began studies to qualify himself for such a post. Soon however he turned away from those studies in disgust; the Police Department lost an honest Daroga, and Bengal gained the most talented author and enthusiastic reformer of his day! Another friend advised the young man to study law; but Akhay Kumar instinctively felt, it was not the vocation for him. "Laws change from day to day," he said, "what is the good of studying them? I desire to learn the immutable and unchangeable laws of nature which rule the universe." Thus time rolled on, and eventually, Akhay Kumar discovered his true vocation in life.

The venerable Debendra Nath Tagore had taken up the task of religious reform which Raja Ram Mohan had initiated, and ten years after Ram Mohan's death in England, started the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*, a monthly journal, in 1843. Young Akhay Kumar, then only a youth of 23, became the editor of the paper which soon became a power in the land. It is scarcely possible in the present day, when journals have multiplied all over the country, to adequately describe how eagerly the moral instructions and earnest teachings of Akhay Kumar, conveyed in that famous paper, were perused by a large circle of thinking and enlightened readers.

People, all over Bengal, awaited every issue of that paper with eagerness, and the silent and sickly but indefatigable worker at his desk swayed for a number of years the thoughts and opinions of the thinking portion of the people of Bengal. Scientific articles, moral instructions, accounts of different nations and tribes, stories of the animate and inanimate creation, all that could enlighten the expanding intellect of Bengal and dispel darkness and pejudices, found a convenient vehicle in the *Tatwabodhini Patrika.* The great *Prabhakar*, conducted with all the ability and wit of the veteran Iswar Chandra Gupta, continued to be a favourite with orthodox Hindus of the old school. But the *Patrika* was conducted in a newer style, and struck a deeper cord in the heart of the young Hindu. It created a thirst for knowledge and for moral elevation, it awakened in rising generations a moral enthusiasm and a religious fervour, and it spread that spirit of reform and of progress of which Raja Ram Mohan Rai was the first great apostle in this century. The profound thought and the earnest tone of Akhay Kumar's writings struck even those who were intensely partial to English education in those days. It is said that the talented Ram Gopal Ghosh, one of the most brilliant students of the Hindu College, read one of Akhay Kumar's articles, and turning to his friend, the distinguished Ram Tanu Lahiri, remarked ;—"Have you ever seen profound and thoughtful composition in the Bengali language? It is here."

For twelve years, Akhay Kumar worked indefatigably

for this paper. He formed a style of Bengali prose which for elevation, dignity and moral earnestness, has never been surpassed. He wrote articles some of which have since been separately collected and published, and are his best known works, like *Charupatha* and *Dharmaniti*. And for twelve years he was the apostle and the teacher of the party of progress and reform in Bengal. But nature could sustain no longer, and Akhay Kumar was prostrated by a disease of the head.

While Akhay Kumar distinguished himself by his writings in the *Tatwabodhini*, the venerable Vidyasagar also made his mark in literature by works, the like of which Bengal had not produced before. His great abilities, and his connection with the Sanscrit College and the Education Department, gave Vidyasagar immense influence and power, and he exerted that influence to reward real merit. He appreciated the talent and genius of Akhay Kumar, and when the post of Deputy Inspectors of schools was created, Vidyasagar offered one of them, with a pay Rs. 150 a month, to Akhay Kumar. The latter was then getting only Rs. 60 a month as editor of *Tatwabodhini*, but his duty impelled him to the task, and Akhay Kumar knew no higher pleasure in life than the performance of his duty. He therefore declined without a pang the more lucrative appointment offered to him.

But the philanthropic Vidyasagar would not be thwarted. When the Normal School was established in Calcutta, Vidyasagar settled with the authorities that Akhay Kumar would be its head teacher on a pay of

Rs. 200 a month. Akhay Kumar wished to decline this offer also, and it was only at Vidyasagar's strong and persistent request that he was compelled to accept it. The annals of literature are replete with stories of mutual jealousies between rival authors; it is with sincere gratification, therefore, that we record this evidence of cordial good feelings between Vidyasagar and Akhay Kumar,—feelings which reflect equal honour on both the great writers.

It was in 1855, that he withdrew himself from the work in connection with the *Patrika*, and became Head teacher of the Calcutta Normal School. But his disease became worse, and he had to resign the appointment after two or three years. The year which marked the death of Iswar Chandra Gupta witnessed the practical retirement of Akhay Kumar from all work.

He lived for nearly thirty years in enforced privacy and retirement. One great work issued from his retirement; it is an account of the Hindu sects, adapted from H. H. Wilson's English work, and prefaced by a long dissertation on the Hindu Aryans which is a masterpiece of learning and erudition, conveyed in forcible and graceful style.

After nearly thirty years of an inactive life, the talented Akhay Kumar passed away from us in 1886. He lived to see the fruits of his labour; and the generation which had grown up around him in his closing days had been educated on his works, imbued with that healthy knowledge which he laboured to spread, and with that earnest spirit of progress which he endeavoured to

infuse. He lived also to see the Bengali style, which he and Vidyasagar had dignified, made richer day by day by varied and meritorious works.

The great merit of Akhay Kumar's style is its earnestness, its surpassing vigour and force. We quote a few passages below,* and the reader will be able to judge for himself The style is the man, and Akhay Kumar's

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* কিছুকাল ইতস্ততঃ ভ্রমণানন্তর দূর হইতে এক অপূর্ব্ব সরোবর দেখিতে পাইলাম এবং তদ্দর্শনার্থে আমার অত্যন্ত কৌতুহল উপস্থিত হইল। ক্রমে ক্রমে নিকটবর্ত্তী হইয়া দেখি, কতকগুলি পরম-পবিত্র সর্ব্বাঙ্গ-সুন্দরী কন্যা সরোবর-তটে বিচরণ করিতেছেন। তাঁহাদের অসামান্য রূপ-লাবণ্য, প্রফুল্ল পবিত্র মুখশ্রী এবং সারল্য ও বাৎসল্য স্বভাব অবলোকন করিয়া অপরিমেয় প্রীতি লাভ করিলাম। আশ্চর্য্য এই যে, তাঁহাদিগের শরীরে কোন অলঙ্কার নাই, অথচ অনলঙ্কারই তাঁহাদের অলঙ্কার হইয়াছে। বোধ হইল, যেন আনন্দ-প্রতিমাগুলি ইতস্ততঃ ক্রীড়া করিয়া বেড়াইতেছে। আমি বিস্ময়াপন্ন হইয়া মনে মনে বিবেচনা করিতে লাগিলাম, ইহাঁরা দেব-কন্যা হইবেন, তাহার সংশয় নাই। তখন বিদ্যা দেবী সাতিশয় অনুকম্পা পুরঃ-সর ঈষৎ হাস্য করিয়া কহিলেন, তুমি যথার্থ অনুমান করিয়াছ, ইহাঁরা দেব-কন্যাই বটেন এবং এই ধর্ম্মাচল ইহাঁদের বাস-ভূমি। ইহাঁদের কাহারও নাম দয়া, কাহরও নাম ভক্তি, কাহারও নাম ক্ষমা, কাহারও নাম অহিংসা, কাহারও নাম মৈত্রী, ইত্যাদি সকলেরই নিজ নিজ গুণানুসারে নামকরণ হইয়াছে। ইহাঁদের রূপ ভুবন বিখ্যাত। ইহাঁরা যে পর্য্যন্ত সুশীল, তাহা কি বলিব? বিদ্যারণ্য যাত্রীদিগের মধ্যে যাঁহারা এই ধর্ম্মাচল আরো-হণ করেন, তাঁহাদিগেরই শ্রম সফল ও জন্ম সার্থক হয়। তুমি এই সরোবরে স্নান করিয়া শরীর স্নিগ্ধ ও জীবন পবিত্র কর।

বিদ্যা দেবীর উপদেশানুসারে আমি উল্লিখিত শান্তি-সাগরে অবগাহন করিয়া অভূত পূর্ব্ব অতি নির্ম্মল আনন্দ-নীরে নিমগ্ন হইতেছিলাম, ইতিমধ্যে নিদ্রাভঙ্গ হইয়া দেখি, সেই সুন্দর মারুত-সেবিত যমুনা কুলেই শয়িত হইয়া রহিয়াছি।—[চারুপাঠ, তৃতীয় ভাগ,—বিদ্যা-বিষয়ক স্বপ্ন দর্শন।]

মহাবল পরাক্রান্ত বীর্য্যবন্ত পূর্ব্বপুরুষেরা এক হস্তে হল-যন্ত্র ও অপর হস্তে রণ শস্ত্র গ্রহণ পূর্ব্বক, পুত্র-কলত্র-দৌহিত্রাদির অগ্রণী হইয়া, উৎসাহিত ও অশঙ্কিত মনে, স্নেহ-পালিত গোধন-সঙ্গে, ভারতবর্ষ প্রবেশ করিতেছেন,

style reflects the true patriot and the earnest, enthusiastic reformer. Vidyasagar's style appears to us to be more finished and refined, Akhay Kumar's is more forcible and earnest. In Vidyasagar's style we admire the placid stilless and soft beauty of a quiet lake, reflecting on its bosom the gorgeous tints of the sky and the surrounding objects. In Akhay Kumar's style we admire the vehemence and force of the mountain

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ইহা স্মরণ ও চিন্তা করা, কি অপরিসীম আনন্দেরই বিষয়? ইচ্ছা হয়, তাঁহাদের আগমন-পদবীতে আম্র-শাখা-সমন্বিত সলিল-পূর্ণ কলসাবলী সংস্থাপন করিয়া রাখি এবং সমুচিত মঙ্গলাচরণ সমাধান পূর্ব্বক, তাঁহাদিগকে প্রীতি প্রফুল্ল হৃদয়ে প্রত্যুদ্গমন করিয়া আনি ও সেই পূজ্য-পাদ পিতৃ পুরুষদিগের পদাম্বুজ-রজঃ গ্রহণ করিয়া কলেবর পবিত্র করিতে থাকি! আহা! আমি কি অবশ্বদ্ধ অলীকবৎ প্রলাপ বাক্য বলিতেছি! তখন আমাদের অস্তিত্ব কোথায়! আমরা তখন অনাগত-কাল-গর্ভে নিহিত ছিলাম! এই সমস্ত স্বপ্ন-কল্পিত বাসনার এই স্থানেই অবসান হওয়া ভাল!—[ভারতবর্ষীয় উপাসক-সম্প্রদায়, ১ম ভাগ,—আর্য্যগণের ভারতবর্ষ-প্রবেশ।]

যাঁহাদের দুঃখ দেখিয়া দয়ার উদ্রেক হয় না ও পাতক দেখিয়া অশ্রদ্ধার আবির্ভাব হয় না, এ বিষয়ে তাঁহাদের পরামর্শ জিজ্ঞাসা করিবার প্রয়োজন নাই। যাঁহার কিছু মাত্রও হিতাহিত বোধ আছে, ও যাঁহার অন্তঃকরণে কস্মিন্‌কালে কারুণ্য-রসের সঞ্চার হয়, তাঁহাকেই জিজ্ঞাসা করি, "বিধবা বিবাহ প্রচলিত হওয়া উচিত কি না?" যিনি কোন নব বিধবা তরুণী স্ত্রীকে সদ্যোমৃত প্রিয়-পতির শোক-মোহে মুহ্যমানা, ধরাতলে লুণ্ঠমনা ও অহর্নিশ রোরুদ্যমানা দর্শন করিয়া কাতর হইয়াছেন, তাঁহাকেই জিজ্ঞাসা করি, "বিধবা বিবাহ প্রচলিত হওয়া উচিত কি না?" যিনি দেখিয়াছেন, যে সাধ্বী রমণী মাস-দ্বয় পূর্ব্বে স্বামী-সমাদরে মানিনী ও গৌরবিণী বলিয়া স্ত্রীজনের নিকট প্রসিদ্ধ ছিল, সেই স্ত্রী মাস-দ্বয় পরে একান্ত অনাথা ও নিতান্ত সহায় হীনা হইয়া দীন-ভাবে, শীর্ণ শরীরে, সাশ্রু-নয়নে দিনপাত করিতেছে, এবং স্বামী-সম্পর্কীয় বিদ্বেষিণী রমণীগণ কর্ত্তৃক নানা প্রকারে নিগৃহীত ও পরিবারস্থ দাসদাসিগণ কর্ত্তৃক উপেক্ষিত ও অশ্রদ্ধিত হইয়া, কাতরস্বরে প্রতিবেশীদিগের দয়ার্দ্র হৃদয় বিদীর্ণ করিতেছে, তাঁহাকেই জিজ্ঞাসা করি বিধবা-বিবাহ প্রচলিত হওয়া উচিত কি না? [বিধবা বিবাহ।]

torrent in its wild and rugged beauty. Vidyasagar is the more accomplished master of style, Akhay Kumar is the more forcible preacher. Modern Bengali prose, as we understand it, has been shaped by these twin workers whose memory will be long preserved in Bengal.

We have said before that both these writers were enthusiastic in the cause of social reform. Vidyasagar's great work of reform was to ameliorate the condition of Hindu widows, and to legalize their remarriage. Akhay Kumar was compelled by his illness to retire early from the field of active work, and could not take a part in this noble movement; but the last extract which we have quoted below shews how earnestly, how intensely he felt on the subject. Every true-hearted Hindu must feel keenly on the subject; but it is given only to men like Akhay Kumar and Vidyasagar, who combine a manly courage with true tenderness of heart, to battle against unreasoning prejudices and heartless selfishness in the cause of reform.

It would be going somewhat beyond the scope of our work to indicate the influence which Akhay Kumar exerted on the Brahma Samaj to which he belonged. His biographer, Pandit Mahendra Nath informs us, that it was Akhay Kumar's uncompromising regard for truth which led him to question the infallibility of the *Vedanta*. He thought on the subject, and discussed it with his fellow-workers, until the Brahma community were at last persuaded to reject the doctrine of the infallibility of the ancient scriptures, while they still continued to

revere them as holy and venerable works, nobly fitted for our instruction and guidance. This was one of the most noted changes in the history of the Brahma Samaj, and it was due to Akhay Kumar, more than to any one else.

We are indebted also to Pandit Mahendra Nath Vidyanidhi for many passages from the writings and speeches of Akhay Kumar, which have never yet been published in a collected form, but which are instinct with eloquence and beauty. A complete edition of Akhay Kumar's literary works has yet to be published, and we look to the Brahma Samaj for the performance of this patriotic task.

Other Religious Writers.

A host of talented writers continued the work when Akhay Kumar retired from the field. The venerable Debendra Nath Tagore continued to preside over the Brahma Samaj, and issued a series of religious works which have greatly benefited and dignified Bengali prose. Raj Narayan Basu, the companion and collaborator of Akhay Kumar, has enriched the language by a series of lectures and discourses mostly on religious subjects. The sons of Debendra Nath have distinguished themselves in literature and song, and the Bengali language will bear on it the impress of the work of this talented and cultured family. Keshab Chandra Sen and his section of the Brahma Samaj have followed in the footsteps of Debendra Nath, and have enriched Bengali literature by

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sermons and lectures. And Pandit Siva Nath Sastri, who heads the third section of the Samaj, is also the writer of meritorious works. Thus modern Bengali literature owes much to the religious movement initiated by Ram Mohan Rai.

CHAPTER XVI.

Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar.

1820–1891.

Akhay Kumar and Iswar Chandra were twin workers in the field of social reform and literary culture. Iswar Chandra began a little later than Akhay Kumar, but his endeavours were more arduous and more prolonged, and the scene of his struggles against social abuses lay not only in the arena of letters, but also in the arena of actual life.

Iswar Chandra was born in 1820 in the village of Birsinha, which was within the limits of Hooghly District at one time, but is now within the limits of Midnapur. He was the eldest son of his father Thakurdas Banerjea, who held a humble post in Calcutta on Rs. 10 a month. Like Akhay Kumar, he received his early training in his village Patshala, but was removed by his father to Calcutta at the age of nine, and was admitted in the Sanscrit College. Iswar Chandra suffered all the privations of poverty; he lodged in poor quarters, lived on poor food, cooked his own meals, and wore ragged clothes, while he was prosecuting his studies. And not unoften he suffered from the pangs of hunger, and went without a meal. Few of the thousands of students who prosecute their studies in our schools in the present day have any idea of the privations which poor Iswar had to go through, sixty years ago.

Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar.

In the midst of such privations, young Iswar Chandra distinguished himself by his remarkable intelligence, and generally held the first place in his class. He studied Sanscrit Grammar, Literature, Astronomy, Sacred Law, and Philosophy, distinguished himself by his compositions in Sanscrit prose and verse, and also picked up a slight knowledge of English. In 1839 he finished his education by passing an examination in Hindu Law, and obtained the title of Vidyasagar; and in 1841 he was appointed Head Pandit of Fort William College, on a pay of Rs. 50. It was then that young Vidyasagar began to improve his knowledge of English.

Five years later, when Akhay Kumar was swaying the ideas and opinions of thoughtful and earnest men in Bengal by his articles in the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*, Iswar Chandra was appointed Assistant Secretary to the Sanscrit College. The following year, 1847, witnessed the publication of his first literary work, *Betal-Panchabinsati.* The work marked an epoch in the history of Bengali prose, and the beauty and richness of Vidyasagar's style disclosed resources of the Bengali language which no one had suspected before. Nevertheless, like all first attempts, *Betal* had its faults; the style was too ornate, and a little too artificial.

Iswar Chandra was a man of great independence of character. His suggestions in some matters were not accepted by Rasamay Dutt,* then Secretary to the

* The proper spelling is *Datta.* But we write the name as it is written by the members of this cultured family.

Sanscrit College and a leading man of his time, and Iswar Chandra resigned his appointment as Assistant Secretary.

He entered the Fort William College once more as a Head Clerk, and soon associated himself with the great and good-hearted Drinkwater Bethune in the cause of female education in Bengal. And in 1850 the management of the girls' school, called after Bethune, was entrusted entirely to the enthusiastic Pandit. In the same year he re-entered the Sanscrit College as Professor of Literature, in the post vacated by Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, of whom we have spoken before. But a higher honour was in store for him. Rasamay Dutt resigned his post about this time, the posts of Secretary and Assistant Secretary were amalgamated into that of Principal, and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was appointed the first Principal of the Sanscrit College.

Vidyasagar had now ample opportunities to reform the method of teaching in that institution, and his modern and easy method is appreciated by thousands of young Bengalis who have studied Sanscrit since. It became possible, under this method, to acquire a knowledge of Sanscrit without shutting ones-self out from all other learning and knowledge in the universe.

Educational work of all kinds crowded on Vidyasagar thick and fast. His friend Bethune died in 1851, and the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Frederick Halliday, placed the Bethune School under the management of Vidyasagar. The great scheme of establishing aided schools all over Bengal was inaugurated in 1854, and Vidyasagar sub-

mitted his masterly report for carrying out that scheme. His plan was approved, and he was appointed Inspecter of Hooghly, Burdwan, Midnapur and Nadiya on a pay of Rs. 200, in addition to Rs. 300 which he was now getting as Principal of Sanscrit College. He organized boys' schools in the four districts, established over 40 girls' schools in Hooghly and Burdwan, and superintended the work of the Sanscrit College and the Normal School in Calcutta. In the midst of these vast labours he never rested from his literary work ; his *Sakuntala*, adapted from the Sanscrit drama of Kalidasa, was published in 1855.

But a task, mightier than educational reform and literary culture, now attracted the attention and the energies of the great and manly worker. Great as was his intellect, Vidyasagar's heart was yet greater, and the unfortunate condition of his countrywomen often affected him to tears. The wrongs of Hindu widows aroused his strongest sympathy, and he now prepared himself for a great movement to redress those wrongs.

It did not take a Pandit of Vidyasagar's learning much time to discover that the ancient Hindu scriptures did not enjoin perpetual widowhood ; and in 1855 he startled the Hindu world by his work on the remarriage of Hindu widows. The excitement which the work, coming from the pen of a learned Brahman, caused among the orthodox Hindus of the day cannot be described. Abuse and vituperation were poured forth from all sides on his devoted head, pamphlets and publications purporting to point out his mistake were issued in quick

succession, songs were composed and sung in Calcutta and in remote districts, rediculing Vidyasagar and his great endeavour. Amidst this storm of indignation which he had raised, Vidyasagar stood unappalled and unmoved. He issued a second book on the subject, replying to all the arguments which had been brought against his position, and replying to them with a wealth of learning and a facility of expression which silenced opposition, and practically closed the controversy ! Not content with this literary triumph, Vidyasagar associated himself with all the influential men of his time, with Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Ram Gopal Ghosh, Pratap Chandra Sinha and others, and appealed to Government to declare that the sons of remarried Hindu widows should be considered legitimate heirs. The Government of the day responded to this reasonable demand against unreasoning opposition and heartless selfishness, and the measure was passed into law in 1856.

But the reformer's work was only half done. Vidyasagar was not the man to sleep in the shade of his laurels. He raised subscriptions in the cause of widow-marriages, and the very year, in which the law was passed, witnessed the celebration of the marriage of a Hindu widow with Srish Chandra Vidyaratna, then Judge-Pandit of Murshidabad. Other instances followed, and some years later the indomitable reformer gave his only son in marriage with a widow. Never since the days of Ram Mohan Rai had Bengal witnessed such single-hearted devotion in the cause of reform, such triumph of humanity over the wrongs and abuses of centuries. Widow-

marriages have not been very frequent in Hindu society since that time, but the path is now open ; and Hindu fathers who will have the courage to save their girls of tender years from life-long widowhood will bless the name of the great reformer for generations to come.

Vidyasagar did not long retain his appointment under Government. His great independence of character did not always please his superiors, and he resigned his appointments, worth Rs. 500 a month, in 1858. Four years after he produced his master work, *Sitar Banabas*, based on Bhavabhuti's finest drama in Sanscrit. Whether we consider the grace and elegance of the style, the skilfulness of the narration, or the tenderness and pathos which pervade the work, we must rank it among the noblest productions in Bengali prose.

Minor works proceeded from the pen of the veteran writer in quick succession, and were welcomed and adopted in schools all over Bengal. The princely income which Vidyasagar thus derived was devoted to the relief of suffering and distress. Hundreds of widows and orphans owed their living and education to his charity, every great cause, every worthy movement, received his support, and the greatest and richest zemindars of the land delighted to honour the venerable Pandit who lived a simple life, whose courage in the cause of reform was indomitable, whose kindness and charity were inexhaustible. The name of Vidyasagar became a household word all over Bengal, his charities were far-reaching and extensive, his help was sought for by those in distress and never sought in vain, and his books

were read by the young and the old. Vidyasagar was scarcely better known as an author than as a reformer and a philanthropist.

One more lofty aim attracted his attention in his later days. The system of polygamy, specially prevalent among the Kulin classes of Bengal, is degrading to men, and causes untold suffering to women, and the veteran reformer girded up his loins once more in the cause of reform. He published works proving that the ancient Hindu Sastras do not sanction polygamy without restriction, and are not as merciless to women as modern Hindu custom has come to be. Once more, orthodox Hindu society felt the blow from the gauntleted hand of the Pandit. Replies were attempted, and abuse was showered on the reformer in vain, for Vidyasagar stood unmoved. It was not possible however for the Government to prohibit polygamy by law, and the triumph of Vidyasagar in this instance remained only a literary triumph.

This was Vidyasagar's last great endeavour. The last fifteen years of his life were spent in well-earned repose, and the Government created him a Companion of the Indian Empire in 1877. His zeal for progress remained unabated, and he never hesitated to extend a helping hand to those who needed his help.* His

* My readers will pardon my citing a characteristic instance which concerns myself. When I commenced a translation of the Rigveda Sanhita into the vernacular of Bengal in 1885, my endeavour to popularize the ancient scriptures met with a perfect storm of opposition from my orthodox countrymen. Among the few Pandits who encouraged me in the task was the venerable Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar.

charities too continued unabated, and thus passed the closing years of the great author, reformer and philanthropist, until he died in 1891, lamented all over Bengal as no man has ever been lamented within our recollection. Monuments of marble and bronze lie scattered all over our metropolis in memory of men considered great, because they held high posts in their day. The monument of Vidyasagar is in the hearts of his countrymen, and will remain for ever enshrined in their grateful recollections.*

Other Prose-Writers.

At the close of an account of Vidyasagar's life, some mention should be made of Bhudeb Mukerji, who succeeded Vidyasagar as an educationist, and has

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* The following is a fair specimen of Vidyasagar's style :

লক্ষ্মণকে এইরূপ শোকাভিভূত দেখিয়া, সীতা কহিলেন, বৎস! তোমার অপরাধ কি? তুমি কেন অকারণে এত কাতর হইতেছ ও পরিতাপ করিতেছ? তোমার উপর রুষ্ট বা অসন্তুষ্ট হইবার কথা দূরে থাকুক, আমি কায়মনোবাক্যে দেবতাদিগের নিকট নিয়ত এই প্রার্থনা করিব, যেন জন্মান্তরে তোমার মত গুণের দেবর পাই; তুমি চিরজীবী হও। তুমি অযোধ্যায় গিয়া আর্য্যপুত্রচরণে আমার প্রণাম জানাইবে। ভরত, শত্রুঘ্ন ও আমার ভগিনীদিগকে সস্নেহ সম্ভাষণ করিবে। শ্বশ্রূদেবীরা ভগবান্ ঋষ্যশৃঙ্গের আশ্রম হইতে প্রত্যাগমন করিলে, তাঁহাদের চরণে আমার সাষ্টাঙ্গপ্রণিপাত নিবেদন করিবে। বৎস! তোমায় আর একটি কথা বলিয়া দি; আমি চিরদুঃখিনী, বিধাতা আমার অদৃষ্টে সুখ লিখেন নাই; সুতরাং আমার যে সর্ব্বনাশ ঘটিল, তাহাতে আমি দুঃখিত নহি। কিন্তু এই করিও, যেন আমার ভগিনীগুলি দুঃখ না পায়। তাহারা আমার নিমিত্ত অত্যন্ত শোকাকুল হইবেক; যাহাতে ত্বরায় তাহাদের শোকনিবৃত্তি

also written some works in Bengali prose. He was born in Calcutta, and was junior to Vidyasagar by five years; and he was educated first in the Sanscrit College,

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হয়, সে বিষয়ে তোমরা তিনজনে সতত যত্ন করিও; তাহারা সুখে থাকিলেও, আমার অনেক দুঃখ নিবারণ হইবেক। তাহাদিগকে বলিবে আমি অদৃষ্টের ফলভোগ করিতেছি, আমার জন্যে শোকাকুল হইবার ও ক্লেশভোগ করিবার প্রয়োজন নাই।

এই বলিয়া, স্নেহভরে বারংবার আশীর্ব্বাদ করিয়া, সীতা লক্ষ্মণকে প্রস্থান করিতে বলিলেন। লক্ষ্মণ বাষ্পাকুল লোচনে ও গদ্গদ বচনে, আর্যে! আমার অপরাধ মার্জ্জনা করিবেন, অঞ্জলিবন্ধনপূর্ব্বক এই কথা বলিয়া, পুনরায় প্রণাম ও প্রদক্ষিণ করিয়া নৌকায় আরোহণ করিলেন। সীতা অবিচলিত নয়নে নিরীক্ষণ করিয়া রহিলেন। নৌকা ক্ষণকালমধ্যে ভাগীরথীর অপর পারে সংলগ্ন হইল। লক্ষ্মণ তীরে উত্তীর্ণ হইলেন, এবং কিয়ৎ ক্ষণ নিষ্পন্দ নয়নে জানকীকে নিরীক্ষণ করিয়া, অশ্রুবিসর্জ্জন করিতে করিতে রথে আরোহণ করিলেন। রথ চলিতে আরম্ভ করিল। যত ক্ষণ দেখিতে পাওয়া যায়, লক্ষ্মণ অনিমিষ নয়নে সীতাকে নিরীক্ষণ করিতে লাগিলেন, সীতাও স্থির নয়নে সেই রথে দৃষ্টিপাত করিয়া রহিলেন। রথ ক্রমে ক্রমে দূরবর্ত্তী হইল। তখন লক্ষ্মণ, আর সীতাকে লক্ষিত করিতে না পারিয়া, হাহাকার ও শিরে করাঘাত করিয়া রোদন করিতে লাগিলেন। সীতাও, রথ নয়নপথের অতীত হইবামাত্র যূথবিরহিত কুররীর ন্যায়, উচ্চৈঃস্বরে ক্রন্দন করিতে আরম্ভ করিলেন।

A more eloquent passage on the cruel custom of enforced widowhood is quoted below:

হা ভারতবর্ষ! তুমি কি হতভাগ্য! তুমি তোমার পূর্ব্বতন সন্তানগণের আচারগুণে পুণ্যভূমি বলিয়া সর্ব্বত্র পরিচিত হইয়াছিলে, কিন্তু তোমার ইদানীন্তন সন্তানেরা স্বেচ্ছানুরূপ আচার অবলম্বন করিয়া তোমাকে যেরূপ পুণ্যভূমি করিয়া তুলিয়াছেন, তাহা ভাবিয়া দেখিলে সর্ব্বশরীরের শোণিত শুষ্ক হইয়া যায়। * *

হায় কি পরিতাপের বিষয়! যে দেশের পুরুষজাতির দয়া নাই, ধর্ম্ম নাই, ন্যায় অন্যায় বিচার নাই, হিতাহিত বোধ নাই, সদ্বিবেচনা নাই, কেবল লৌকিক রক্ষাই প্রধান কর্ম্ম ও পরম ধর্ম্ম, আর যেন সে দেশে হতভাগা অবলাজাতি জন্মগ্রহণ না করে।

and then in the Hindu College. After filling the posts of Head Master of Howrah School and Superintendent of Hooghly Normal School, Bhudeb became Assistant Inspector of Schools in 1862, and eventually Inspector of a Division in 1869. He was made a Companion of the Indian Empire in 1877, and a member of the Bengal Council in 1882, and in the following year he retired from service. He died in 1894. His earliest works are two historical tales in Bengali, adapted from a well known English book called Romance of History. His latest works are his three thoughtful *Prabandhas* or essays on domestic life, society, and ceremonial rites, which fill nearly eight hundred pages of his printed works.

Another historical romance is *Bangadhip Parajaya* by Pratap Chandra Ghosh. Hara Chandra Ghosh succeeded Rasamay Dutt as Judge of the Court of Small Causes in Calcutta. Both were leading men in their time, and they were the first natives of Bengal who filled that high and responsible post. Pratap Chandra is the son of Hara Chandra Ghosh, and his work is connected with the story of the conquest of Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore, by Man Sinha the general of Akbar.

A more witty writer was Pyari Chand Mitra, and his *Alaler-gharer Dulal* is a social tale of Bengal. It has been translated into English.

The patriotic zemindar Kali Prasanna Sinha also wrote a satirical sketch on modern society called *Hutam Pechar Naksha ;* but he has done more lasting service to

the cause of Bengali literature and modern progress by his meritorious translation of the Sanscrit *Mahabharata* into Bengali prose. The work had been translated into Bengali by the Pandits of the Maharaja of Burdwan some years before, but Kali Prasanna Sinha's translation is simpler and more literal, and is more acceptable to the public. He employed a number of Pandits to make this translation, and widely distributed the work, free of cost, among those who took an interest in the ancient epic.

The example of Kali Prasanna Sinha was not lost, and the *Ramayana* was published in original Sanscrit, with a meritorious prose translation into Bengali, by Pandit Hem Chandra Vidyaratna, in 1868 to 1885.

Kali Prasanna Sinha's *Mahabharata* and Hem Chandra Vidyaratna's *Ramayana* are the best prose translations of those epics in the Bengali language.

CHAPTER XVII.

DRAMATIC WRITERS. DINA BANDHU MITRA.

1829-1873.

KULINA-KULA-SARVASVA is said to be the first original dramatic work in Bengali. It was composed in 1854, and indicates the spirit of the times. The veteran satirist, Iswar Chandra Gupta, was still hurling his sarcasms on all social reforms, but the shafts of his wit fell pointless among the earnest workers of the day. The Hindu College was yielding its annual crop of young men with English education and western notions; Akhay Kumar had educated his countrymen in advanced ideas; and the great Vidyasagar had espoused the cause of female education, and was even then meditating his memorable attack on the cruel custom of enforced widowhood. It was at such a time, in 1854, that the first original dramatic composition, *Kulina-Kula-Sarvasva* held up the custom of Kulinism and polygamy to deserved ridicule and contempt.

The author, Ram Narayan Tarkaratna, was junior to Vidyasagar by three years, being born in 1823; and was educated in the Sanscrit College. He then became a teacher in the College, retired on pension in his old age, and died in 1885.

The history of the stage in Bengal deserves a brief narration. *Jatra* and other theatrical performances

of the old style were the pastime of our fathers, and *Kabi*, *Pachali* and *Half-Akrai* were then in fashion. But the *Sans-Souci* theatre was established in Chowringhee early in the century, and men like H. H. Wilson, the oriental scholar, and Hume, Magistrate of Calcutta, took part in the performances. Native Indian gentlemen witnessed these performances, and occasionally got up theatrical performances among themselves; and Shakespeare's plays were acted in English, or Sanscrit dramas were acted in Bengali translations. At the special request of Jotindra Mohan Tagore, (now Maharaja Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore,) Ram Narayan's original drama *Kulina-Kula-Sarvasva* was acted in 1856 in the premises of the Oriental Seminary. In the following year the eminent Kali Prasanna Sinha, translator of the Mahabharata, had his own translation of *Vikramorvasi* acted in his house with great pomp and magnificence, the translator himself taking a part on the stage. The performance excited a great deal of interest in the town.

It was then decided between Jotindra Mohan Tagore and Rajas Pratap Chandra and Iswar Chandra of the Paikpara Raj family to get up a permanent theatrical house on a grand scale for the encouragement of the Bengali drama. The scheme was matured, and Ram Narayan the author of *Kulina-Kula-Sarvasva* was to compose a new drama. The magnificent garden house of Belgachia, belonging to the Paikpara Rajas, was to be the scene of the new theatre. No expense would be spared to make the scenic decoration and the performance a success.

It was under such auspices that Pandit Ram Narayan's second drama, *Ratnavali*, was to be acted. But the Rajas had many friends among the European officials of Calcutta, and they desired to witness the performance. It was necessary to invite them; it was necessary to make an English translation of the drama in order to enable them to follow the acting.

This was the first introduction of the greatest literary genius of the century into the arena of letters. Madhu Sudan Datta was a brilliant student of the Hindu College. He had become a Christian and had gone to Madras, where he had worked as a teacher, and distinguished himself by his "Captive Ladie" and other compositions in English verse. He had now returned to Calcutta and held an appointment in the Police Court. He was selected to translate the new drama for the English visitors, and he did it with credit and distinction.

At last in July 1858, the drama was acted under circumstances of pomp and scenic decorations which surpassed the utmost expectations. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, the Judges of the High Court, and other high officials witnessed the performance. Every one was charmed with the acting; a new era was opened for the Bengal Drama.

Madhu Sudan's ambition was fired. He had written much in English verse, and had written with ability and poetic talent, but all attempts to court the Muses in a foreign tongue must be fruitless. His genius saw at a glance its true scope. Madhu Sudan who had hitherto never written a line of Bengali prose or verse,

Madhu Sudan who almost despised the Bengali language, —was impelled by his "vaulting ambition" to be a Bengali author! His friends laughed at the idea; they did not know what is possible for true genius to attempt, and to achieve.

Madhu Sudan was thus the first student of the Hindu College, properly educated in English, who turned to Bengali literature. All the renowned authors who had hitherto served their mother-tongue, Iswar Chandra Gupta, Akhay Kumar Datta, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and others, were men who had acquired an imperfect knowledge of English, mostly by their own endeavours. The *alumnii* of the Hindu College had hitherto looked with contempt on Bengali literature, had written prose and verse in English, had hoped to distinguish themselves in English literature. The truth came like a flash of inspiration to Madhu Sudan Datta that true genius mistakes its vocation when it struggles in a foreign tongue. Madhu Sudan lived to correct his mistake and to be the most eminent poet in his own language. And since Madhu Sudan's time the *alumnii* of our schools and colleges,—those who have sought literary fame and were worthy of it,—have won their laurels in their mother tongue.

The success of *Ratnavali* inspired Madhu Sudan with the idea of writing a Bengali drama. He went to the Asiatic Society's rooms, took away some Sanscrit dramas and Bengali works, read them, and pondered on them. He then put his hand to the task he had imposed on himself, and his genius carried him through.

The result was *Sarmishtha*, one of the best and most beautiful plays in Bengali. The production was submitted to Prem Chand Tarkavagish a learned Pandit of the day, but Prem Chand returned it with the remark that it had sinned against all the rules of the Sanscrit drama! Madhu Sudan was then advised to accept the suggestions of Ram Narayan the successful author of *Ratnavali;* but he would have none of it, and only adopted some of his verbal corrections. He truly wrote to a friend on this occasion,—"You know that a man's style is the reflection of his mind, and I am afraid there is little congeniality between our friend and my poor self. However, I shall adopt some of his corrections."*

The drama was acted at Belgachia theatre with great success, Jotindra Mohan Tagore himself composing some songs for the piece.

Both Ram Narayan and Madhu Sudan lived to compose some more dramas. Ram Narayan's *Naba Natak* is a clever hit on his countrymen who seek to indulge in the joys of wedded life at an advanced age, and marry girl-wives. Madhu Sudan's *Padmavati* and *Krishna Kumari* are meritorious works, the latter being based on the story of the princess of Udaypur whose tragic fate threw a gloom over Rajasthan early in this century. Madhu Sudan then turned to blank verse and to epic poetry; and the story of his success in that line and of his life will be told in another chapter.

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*See Jogendra Nath Basu's life of Michael Madhu Sudan Datta.

As Madhu Sudan retired from the field of Bengali drama, his place was filled by a writer who has won a higher distinction in this department of literature. The new writer was Dina Bandhu Mitra. All the first three dramatists of Bengal were of nearly the same age; Ram Narayan was born in 1823, Madhu Sudan in 1824, and Dina Bandhu in 1829. Like Madhu Sudan Datta, Dina Bandhu was educated in the Hindu College; he distinguished himself in government service in the postal department; but he devoted his talents to the improvement of his mother tongue. He died in 1873.

The oppression of the Indigo planters of Nadiya and Jessore was the subject of complaint for many years; and our readers will find an extract which we have given from Iswar Chandra Gupta's poetry, in which the poet has indulged in a feeling appeal to the Queen of England against this oppression. The oppression however continued unchecked, and Dina Bandhu, who was born in Chauberia village in Nadiya District, had ample opportunities to note the doings of the planters and their subordinates. At last in 1860, he published his first dramatic work, *Nil Darpan*, anonymously, bringing together facts and incidents which had come under his observation, and weaving them into the main plot with the skill of a true artist.

The literary beauties of the work are by no means insignificant. An honest family and its most amiable inmates enlist the sympathy of the reader from the beginning, and at last wake in him the keenest sorrow for their misfortunes. All the members of the family

are well delineated. The old, simple-minded, affectionate father, the elder son managing the estate and the younger studying at a College in Calcutta, and their wives, the most innocent and amiable creatures in the world, have all been well delineated. Clouds gather on the horizon of their felicity and thicken as the story proceeds, and there are few readers who can read to the end without feeling deeply affected.

The sensation caused by the drama was great. The Rev. J. Long, a true-hearted missionary and friend of the people, translated the work into English in order to hold up to the powers that be, a picture of the oppression which was going on under the British rule, for the pecuniary benefit of British adventurers and speculators. This was too much for the European residents of Calcutta, and their organ the *Englishman*. A prosecution was instituted against the Rev. James Long, and he was thus immortalized. The memory of the benevolent missionary, who was fined and imprisoned in the case, is still cherished by the people of Bengal for what he did, and what he suffered for them.

High-handed exercise of power does not always perpetuate a wrong, and the wrong suffered by the raiyats of Bengal from the indigo planters was too glaring to be bolstered up by an unjust prosecution. The Indigo Commission published a report and made disclosures which could not be gainsaid, and Sir John Peter Grant, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, did his best to befriend the raiyats. But the deliverance of the raiyats came from themselves, they combined, all over Nadiya,

not to grow indigo, and they submitted to every outrage rather than yield to the planters. Factory after factory failed in consequence of this combination, and the oppression of indigo planters is a thing of the past in the Nadiya District.

Nothing afterwards written by Dina Bandhu can compare with *Nila Darpan* from a literary point of view. In his *Nabin-Tapasvini* and *Lilavati* there are undoubtedly fine passages, but still there is nothing to equal the pathos which pervades the *Nil Darpan*. In fact the most popular and the best known of Dina Bandhu's later productions like *Sadhabar Ekadasi* and *Jamai Barik* are popular and successful farces, and Dina Bandhu is known to his countrymen more as a humourist and satirist than as a serious dramatic writer. But there is a difference between Dina Bandhu's satires and Iswar Chandra's satires. Iswar Chandra is opposed to all social progress, and he pours forth his withering scorn in his own matchless verse on new-fangled ways. Dina Bandhu is not opposed to any section, he is too good-natured and good-hearted to attack any particular community, he only ridicules folly and vice. The lash of Iswar Chandra's satire cuts deep, Dina Bandhu's milder and gentler admonitions inflict no wound, but hold up vice only in its natural and hedious colours. Iswar Chandra is the more powerful satirist, Dina Bandhu is the pleasanter humourist. Iswar Chandra's ready and witty verse was the war cry of his party, and the barbed and pointed shafts of his vigorous if coarse sarcasms were the wapons of their

war. Dina Bandhu waged no party-strife ; his good-natured humour spread a sunshine of gladness around him, and his ridicule of vice and folly was appreciated by all.

Dina Bandhu also wrote some poems, which are distinguished by a harmonious flow of verse. One instance will suffice.*

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* সুরপুর সমপুর শান্তিপুর ধাম,
গায় গায় অট্টালিকা শোভা অভিরাম,
কিবা ঘাট, কিবা বাট, কিবা ফুলবন,
যে দিকে চাহিয়ে দেখি জুড়ায় নয়ন।
নিষদতি করে লোক সংখ্যা নাহি তার,
গোঁসাই দরজি তাঁতি হাজার হাজার।
শান্তিপুরে ডুরে সাড়ী সরমের অরি,
"নীলাম্বরী," "উলাঙ্গিণী" "সর্ব্বাঙ্গসুন্দরী"।
সারি সারি কত নারী নবীনা সুন্দরী,
চলিতেছে হাস্য মুখে পথ আলো করি,
বাজিছে মোহন মল চঞ্চল চরণে,
উড়িছে অঞ্চল চারু চল সমীরণে,
মনোভব মনোরমা সমা রামাগণ,
হাসিল আনন্দে করি গঙ্গা দরশন,
অঞ্চল পেঁচিয়ে কান্ধে বান্ধিয়ে কোমর
ভাসাইল নব অঙ্গ গঙ্গার উপর,
একেবারে কতরামা জীবনে ভাসিল,
কমলে কমলে যেন কমল ঢাকিল।
গুপ্তিপাড়া গণ্ডগ্রাম বিপরীত পারে,
কুলীন বামুন কত কে বলিতে পারে।
গৌরবে কুলীনগণ বলে দম্ভ করে,
"ষাট বৎসরের মেয়ে আইবুড় ঘরে"।

THE BENGALI STAGE.

Dina Bandhu lived to see the Bengali stage based on a permanent basis,—the patronage of the play-going public. The Bengal Theatre was started shortly before the death of the dramatist, and it has been succeeded by a number of theatrical houses, some of which leave little to be desired in orderly management, scenic decorations, and meritorious acting. The institution, which the Rajas of Paikpara wished to create and to foster in 1856 and in subsequent years from their own resources, became a permanent institution of the land before twenty years had passed; and it now looks up, not to Rajas and chiefs, but to an enlightened public for support. The *Kabi*, the *Pachali*, the *Half-Akrai* are things of the past; *Jatras* too do not attract crowds in the metropolis as they did before; the educated public

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যে কন্যা কুমারী ভাবে চিরদিন রয়,
কুলীন মহলে তারে "ঠ্যাকা মেয়ে" কয়।
এক এক কুলীনের শত শত বিয়ে,
রাখিয়াছে নাম ধাম খাতায় লিখিয়ে।
নিষ্ঠুর নির্দ্দয় নীচ পামর কুলীন,
আপন ভবনে বসি ভাবনা বিহীন,
অশন বসন হীনা দীনা দারা দল
পিতৃ গৃহে কাঙ্গালিনী চক্ষে বহে জল।
ভ্রাতৃযায়া ভাল মুখে কথা নাহি কয়,
অধোমুখে অনাথিনী দিবা নিশি রয়,
কখন পাচিকা বালা কভু দাসী হয়,
তবু কি মুখের অন্ন সুখে উপজয়?

Suradhuni Kavya.

prefer to see modern dramas put on the stage with all the latest improvements and scenic decorations.

Among the successors of Dina Bandhu Mitra, whose name is legion, it will be enough to mention a few of the best. Mano Mohan Basu is the Nestor among the living dramatists, and his *Sati Natak*, *Harish Chandra*, *Ramabhisek*, and other plays will always be read with interest and profit. Jyotirindra Nath Tagore has written *Asrumati* and various other plays, and the talented Rabindra Nath has composed *Raja o Rani* among other works. And lastly, Raj Krishna Rai has composed *Prahlad Charitra* and some other popular plays, but is better known as the translator of *Ramayana* into Bengali verse. Some of our actors on the stage are also the writers of clever plays and meritorious farces.

But a really great dramatic genius has yet to rise in Bengal. The drama has not kept pace in merit with poetry and fiction, of which we will speak in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Madhu Sudan Datta and his Epic Poetry.

1824-1873.

Madhu Sudan Datta is the greatest literary genius of this century, and the full record of his life, compiled by Jogendra Chandra Basu, is the most meritorious biographical work yet written in the Bengali language. This work will be our guide in the present chapter.

Madhu Sudan was born in 1824 in the village of Sagandari in the District of Jessore. His father Raj Narayan Datta had four wives, Madhu Sudan being the child of the eldest. Raj Narayan was a man of property and substance, and a pleader of the Sadar Dewani Adalat. Madhu Sudan remained with him in Calcutta, and was admitted in the Hindu College at the age of thirteen.

The Hindu College, which was established in 1817, effected a revolution in the ideas of the young Hindus of the day. They imbibed in that College a warm appreciation of western literature and western civilization, and brooked with impatience the unreasoning restrictions which modern Hindu customs had imposed on them. Trained under teachers like Derozio and D. L. Richardson, the first young men who came out from the Hindu College were fired with an ambition to reform all that was unhealthy, and to reject all that was hurtful, in Hindu customs and rules. The reaction

Madhu Sudan Datta.

against the restrictions of ages went perhaps a little too far, but we can scarcely regret this reaction to which is really due all the steady improvement and reform which have been effected in this century. One may laugh at the anglicised young collegiates of the first half of this century, but it was those young collegiates whose advanced ideas and training leavened the society in which they lived, and made the sober reforms of later times possible. Men like Kashi Prasad Ghosh, Ram Gopal Ghosh and Rama Prasad Rai, like K. M. Banerjea, Debendra Nath Tagore and Prasanna Kumar Tagore, were among the early students of the Hindu College, and the ideas which they received with their English education permeated the society in which they lived. The writings of Akhay Kumar Datta reflected the progress infused into Hindu society through the Hindu College. The reforms effected by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar were possible only after Hindu society had been permeated with advanced ideas through a healthy English education. For a time the *alumnii* of the Hindu College stood aloof from directly taking a part in improving their national literature; they still indulged in dreams of distinguishing themselves in English. But the dream was dispelled in time, and when the ardent young collegemen espoused the cause of their own national literature, they achieved results which silenced their critics and astonished their best friends. The present century has produced nothing in verse comparable to that of Madhu Sudan and nothing in prose comparable to that of Bankim Chandra.

Madhu Sudan remained in the Hindu College for six years, from 1837 to 1842, and distinguished himself among a band of young men who were remarkably intelligent. Pyari Charan Sarkar, Prasanna Kumar Sarbadhikari, Gobind Chandra Dutt, Shashi Chandra Dutt, Jagadish Nath Rai, Kisori Chand Mitra, Ganendra Mohan Tagore, Bhudeb Mukerji, Raj Narayan Basu, and Bhola Nath Chandra were students of the Hindu College at the same time with Madhu Sudan ; and one of his fellow students writes that Madhu Sudan was the Jupiter among these stars of the Hindu College.

Like many young students of the Hindu College, Madhu Sudan began to write English verse, some of which has been preserved by his biographer. Love and misanthrophy were the favourite themes in those times when Byron's poetry still held the world in thrall, but some patriotic poems, like that on king Porus, indicate that Madhu Sudan felt for his country like the other young men of his day. Permeated with western ideas, the young poet longed to visit Europe even in those early days, and was filled with an ambition for glory or a nameless grave in Albion's distant shore.

"I sigh for Albion's distant shore,
Its valleys green, its mountains high ;
Though friends, relations I have none
In that far clime ! Yet Oh I sigh
To cross the vast Atlantic wave
For glory, or a nameless grave !"

Kidderpur, 1841.

It was during his college days that Madhu Sudan's father desired to give the young man in marriage, and a suitable bride was selected. Madhu Sudan objected,

but his father insisted on the marriage. This was the turning point in Madhu Sudan's life. He ran away to Christian missionaries, was concealed for four days in Fort William, and in February, 1843, was baptised and took the name of Michael Madhu Sudan.

This incident is only one more illustration of the maxim that senseless coercion leads to violent reaction. Madhu Sudan's father and mother were no doubt worthy people; but young Madhu Sudan must have contemplated with grief and humiliation the domestic arrangement under which his mother shared her husband's affection with three other fellow-wives. And when his father determined to marry him against his wishes and entreaties, the young man took the first step which offered itself to him to escape, and became a Christian. The history of social reforms in the present century illustrates the truth that great abuses lead to reform, senseless coercion leads to reaction.

Madhu Sudan now studied in the Bishop's College for four years, his fond father still paying the expenses of his education. Madhu Sudan had learned English and Persian in the Hindu College; he now learned Greek, Latin and Sanscrit in the Bishop's College. Later in life he studied and learnt Telegu and Tamil in Madras, he picked up French, German and Italian in Europe, and he had also some knowledge of Hebrew. Madhu Sudan was thus one of the most distinguished languists among our countrymen.

The relations between Madhu Sudan and his father gradually became strained, and Madhu Sudan felt

himself lonely and without a friend in the world. Some Madras students attended the Bishop's College, and Madhu Sudan secretly resolved to leave his province and to try his chances at Madras. He secretly completed all arrangements, and in 1848, sailed for Madras.

His first days in Madras were days of poverty, wretchedness and distress. Poverty impelled him to write to the local papers, and his elegant composition soon attracted attention. He once more launched into compositions in English verse, and the story of Prithu Rai, the last Hindu King of Delhi, and his bride Sanjuta, formed the subject of his meritorious poem entitled the *Captive Ladie*, which was published in 1849.

The publication excited the utmost interest in Madras, and an English reviewer wrote in the Athenæum that it contained passages which "neither Scott nor Byron would have been ashamed to own." But if Madhu Sudan aspired to win a lasting literary fame by his English poetry, he found out his mistake before long. Even the great and good-hearted Drinkwater Bethune, to whom a copy of the poem was presented, wrote, and wrote truly:

"He could render a far greater service to his country and have a better chance of achieving a lasting reputation for himself if he would employ the taste and talents which he has cultivated by the study of English in improving the standard and adding to the stock of the poems of his own language."

A few days before the publication of his *Captive Ladie*, Madhu Sudan had married the daughter of a European indigo-planter in Madras. Sweet indeed are some of the lines which the poet wrote on this occasion;

"Yes,—like that star which, on the wilderness
Of vasty ocean, wooes the anxious eye
Of lonely mariner,—and wooes to bless,—
For there be hope writ on her brow on high :
He recks not darkling waves,—nor fears the lightless sky.

"Oh ! beautiful as inspiration, when
She fills the poet's breast,—her fairy shrine ;—
Wooed by melodious worship ! Welcome then ;—
Though ours the home of want, I ne'er repine,
Art thou not there, even thou, a priceless gem and mine ?"

But the wedded life of the wild and wayward poet was not destined to be happy. Within a few years after his marriage he was separated from this first wife, and united himself with the daughter of the Principal of the Madras Presidency College. It was this second wife who stuck to him through life amidst all his weaknesses and misfortunes, and was the mother of the children he has left.

After a stay of eight years in Madras, Madhu Sudan returned to Calcutta in 1856 with his English wife. His ambition to distinguish himself by his English compositions had proved fruitless, and he was as helpless and poor as when he had left Bengal. He accepted the humble post of a clerk, and then of an interpreter, of the Calcutta Police Court. It was in these circumstances of distress that Madhu Sudan first turned to the composition of dramas in his own native language, under circumstances which have been described in the last chapter.

Madhu Sudan's first Bengali work *Sarmishtha* appeared in 1858,—the very year which witnessed the death of his great predecessor, Iswar Chandra Gupta. Madhu Sudan's second drama *Padmavati*, appeared in 1859. The poet followed up his success by two clever

farces, unique in his time, one ridiculing the vices and follies of "young Bengal," and the other ridiculing the more dangerous hypocrisy and profligacy of "old Bengal." His successes fired him with a new ambition. He had formed high conceptions of poetry from his deep appreciation of Valmiki and Homer, and he felt within himself a call to imitate the lofty sublimity of those poets. But the jingling of the Bengali rhyme was ill suited to such attempts, and he remarked to his friend and adviser Jotindra Mohan Tagore, that there was no great future for Bengali poetry until the chains of rhyme were rent asunder. Jotindra Mohan replied that blank verse was scarcely suited to the Bengali language, and that even in the French language blank verse was not a success. But, replied Madhu Sudan, Bengali is the daughter of Sanscrit, and nothing is impossible for the child of such a mother! In his enthusiasm Madhu Sudan promised to make the endeavour, and to prove that blank verse in Bengali was possible. Jotindra Mohan listened to the proposal incredulously, but promised to pay for the publication of Madhu Sudan's proposed work, if it was a success. Madhu Sudan set to work with his accustomed impetuosity and zeal, and the *Tilottama*, published in 1860, was the result of this historic conversation.

When this work in blank verse appeared, it took the literary world by surprise. The power of diction, the sublimity of conception, and the beauty of description could not be denied; but nevertheless the reading

world wondered at the audacity of the writer and could not believe his work to be a success. Ridicule was hurled on the ambitious writer from all sides, contemptuous parodies were published, and writers of Iswar Chandra Gupta's school, as well of the modern school of Akhay Kumar and Vidyasagar, pronounced the attempt to be a failure ! The eminent Vidyasagar himself, ever ready to appreciate and encourage merit, could not pronounce *Tilottama* a success ; writers and critics of humbler merit and less candour ridiculed the writer and condemned the work.

Amidst this storm of opposition and ridicule Madhu Sudan stood unmoved. Never was the greatness of his genius, the loftiness of his purpose, the indomitable strength of his will, more manifest. He was resolved to prove by a higher endeavour and a loftier achievement that he was right, and that the world was wrong. It was a repetition of the story of Lord Byron whose earlier poems were condemned, and who retaliated with the might of a giant in his English Bards and Scotch Reviewers. Only Madhu Sudan retaliated in a nobler manner ; he did not abuse his critics, he convinced and silenced them by his success in a higer endeavour.

Among the few who pronounced Madhu Sudan's *Tilottama* to be a success was Jotindra Mohan Tagore himself. He acknowledged the beauty of the work, owned his defeat, and published the work at his own expense. The eminent Rajendra Lala Mitra, who was issuing the *Bibidhartha-Sangraha* from 1851 for spreading culture and general information among his countrymen, was

another critic who recognized the success of *Tilottama.* And Raj Narayan Basu, the venerable collaborator of Akhay Kumar Datta, was charmed with the noble performance. "If Indra," he wrote, "had spoken Bengali, he would have spoken in the style of the poem. The author's extraordinary loftiness and brilliancy of imagination, his minute observation of nature, his delicate sense of beauty, the uncommon splendour of his diction, and the rich music of his versification charm us in every page."

But a sceptical world had to be convinced, and the world was convinced by Madhu Sudan's grander poem, *Meghanad-badh*, published in 1861. This time the critics were fairly convinced! The great Vidyasagar admitted his mistake with his accustomed candour, and acknowledged Madhu Sudan's genius and the success of his great endeavour. The voice of ridicule, though not completely silenced, failed to have any effect. All Bengal felt that a new light had dawned on the horizon of the nation's literature, that a genius of the first magnitude had appeared. The munificent Kali Prasanna Sinha, translator of the *Mahabharata*, was one of the strongest admirers of Madhu Sudan, and he convened a meeting of the literary society which he had established to honour the great poet. Rajas Pratap Chandra and Iswar Chandra, the cultured Jotindra Mohan Tagore, the talented Rama Prasad Rai and Digambar Mitra and many others were present on this occasion. Madhu Sudan was duly honoured, and the first edition of his *Meghanad-Badh* was exhausted within one year.

It was in this year, 1861, that Madhu Sudan published

his third drama, *Krishna Kumari*, of which we have spoken in the last chapter, as well as his sweet and musical but unfinished work *Brajangana*. And the following year witnessed the publication of the spirited epistles known as the *Birangana*. Within four years, from 1858 to 1862, he built up a literary reputation such as has not been equalled in Bengal in this century, or in any preceding century.

In 1862, Madhu Sudan Datta left India for Europe. He remained in Europe five years, was called to the Bar, and composed a book of Bengali sonnets which is well known to our countrymen. In 1867 he returned from Europe and began practice as a barrister in Calcutta.* He began well, but the poet was not fitted for the ceaseless endeavours and the prosaic duties of a lawyer's vocation. Madhu Sudan's liabilites increased, and his income dwindled away from year to year. His health failed, and his wife who was true to him to the last began also to suffer in health. Friends ceased to lend when there was no hope of repayment, his two children and his wife suffered the pangs of want before his eyes, and mental anxiety and bodily infirmities prostrated him in 1873. He laboured in his death-bed to obtain some pecuniary relief, and composed the

*It was in this year that I had the pleasure of first seeing the great poet. A friend who accompanied me was as great an admirer of Madhu Sudan's poetry as I myself, and Madhu Sudan did us the favour of reading some portions of his *Meghanad* to us. He was then, what he always was in life, genial, kind-hearted, and good, but careless and improvident. Misfortunes darkly closed over the last years of his life, and within six years after I had seen him so genial and so full of life, Madhu Sudan was no more.

Mayakanan, tinged with the tragic sadness which marked the close of his life.

Jay Krishna Mukerji of Uttarpara gave Madhu Sudan a home in that place, but the poet never recovered from the infirmities that were preying on him. He returned to Calcutta, and without a home to call his own, he took shelter in the charitable hospital of Alipur. Three days before the poet's death, his faithful and much-suffering wife Henrietta breathed her last. Madhu Sudan heard of this and with tears in his eyes repeated the sad lines from Macbeth:

> "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
> "Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> "To the last syllable of recorded time. &c.

He died on the 29th June, 1873.

It is not possible within our limits to review the different works of the great poet in detail, and it would be useless to review them cursorily. We will therefore confine our remarks to one of his works, *Meghanad Badh*, which is the greatest literary production of this century.

Meghanad Badh Kavya is a story from the *Ramayana*, and relates to the death of Meghanad or Indrajit, the most renowned and powerful of the sons of Ravana. Ravana stole the wife of Rama in his absence, and Rama with his brother Lakshmana crossed with a large army to Ceylon, and invaded Lanka the capital of Ravana. That great king sent army after army against the besiegers, but the adamantine chain was not broken,

and every army and every general sent against the besieging force perished.

The first book opens with a description of Ravana's court, Ravana being sunk in sorrow at the news of the death of his son Birbahu and the destruction of the force sent with him against Rama. Ravana laments the death of all the great warriors who have fallen fighting against the foe, and compares his great city to a festive house in which the lights are one by one extinguished, and the merry sound of harp and flute hushed into silence. At his request the wounded soldier, who had returned from the battle, recounts the deeds of his son in a spirited description which rouses Ravana from his grief. He mounts on the walls of Lanka, reproaches the great ocean for wearing a fetter of stone to cross over Rama's army, and bursts into grief at the sight of Birbahu's corpse stretched on the field of battle. He returns to his palace which is suddenly filled with the voice of woe; Chitrangada the bereaved mother of Birbahu enters. She had been blessed, she says, with one priceless treasure, and had deposited it with the king, even as a dove deposits her young in the dark hollow of trees. The king is the protector of poor men's property, where is poor Chitrangada's treasure now? Ravana is stung with the reproach of his queen and determines on instant war. At his command the city resounds with the sound of war, and horses and elephants and cars and ranks of warriors fill the streets. Indrajit or Meghanad, the sole surviving son of Ravana, hears that his father has resolved to go to war in person.

He hastens to Lanka from his country seat, and is permitted by his father to lead the army.*

The second book is a description of the heavens. Indra is informed of Meghanad's resolution to fight Rama the next day. Meghanad is invincible in war, and Indra therefore repairs with his wife to the great and benign Uma to pray for the safety of Rama. The conversation that ensues breathes softness, and is worthy of the celestial speakers. Indra pleads the cause of the

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* উত্তর করিলা তবে চারুনেত্রা দেবী
চিত্রাঙ্গদা ;—"দেশবৈরী নাশে যে সমরে,
শুভক্ষণে জন্ম তার ; ধন্য বলে মানি
হেন বীর প্রসূনের প্রসূ ভাগ্যবতী।
কিন্তু ভেবে দেখ, নাথ, কোথা লঙ্কা তব ;
কোথা সে অযোধ্যাপুরী ? কিসের কারণে,
কোন্ লোভে কহ, রাজা, এসেছে এদেশে
রাঘব ? এ স্বর্ণলঙ্কা দেবেন্দ্র বাঞ্ছিত,
অতুল ভবমণ্ডলে ; ইহার চৌদিকে
রজত প্রাচীর সম শোভেন জলধি।
শুনেছি সরযূতীরে বসতি তাহার—
ক্ষুদ্র নর। তব হৈমসিংহাসন আশে
যুঝিছে কি দাশরথী ? বামন হইয়া
কে চাহে ধরিতে চাঁদে ? তবে দেশরিপু
কেন তারে বল, বলি ? কাকোদর সদা
নম্রশিরঃ ; কিন্তু তাহে প্রহরয়ে যদি
কেহ, ঊর্দ্ধফণা ফণী দংশে প্রহারকে।
কে, কহ, এ কাল অগ্নি জ্বালিয়াছে আজি
লঙ্কাপুরে ? হায়, নাথ, নিজকর্ম্ম ফলে,
মজালে রাক্ষসকুলে মজিলা আপনি।"

virtuous Rama, robbed of his wife Sita by the unrighteous Ravana. The wife of Indra takes up the tale, and expatiates on the woes of Sita, now confined in a forest in Lanka, where she weeps day and night for her virtuous lord. Uma answers them with a gracious smile that her lord Siva favors the family of Ravana, and she is powerless to aid Rama. Suddenly a sweet fragrance fills the heavens, and the sound of distant bells is wafted in the air. Rama in distant Lanka is offering his prayers to the benign great Uma. Uma can resist no longer. She repairs to her husband Siva, interrupts him in the midst of his devotions, and obtains a promise that Lakshmana would kill Meghanad on the following day. A message is sent to the goddess Maya who sends down celestial arms to Rama. Rama is full of gratitude to the gods, and enquires how this debt can ever be repaid. Gratitude to gods, truly replies the celestial messenger, consists in supporting and cherishing the poor, in restraining the passions, in living in the paths of virtue, and in adherence to truth. The gift of sandal and flower and silken cloth is despised by gods if the giver is impure.

The third book is one of the most striking and beautiful in the whole work. Pramila, the wife of Meghanad, is disconsolate at the absence of her lord, and longs to leave her country-seat and repair to Lanka where her lord has gone. But the way lies through Rama's army, how can Pramila go? enquires her hand-maid. Pramila, no less favoured with valour than with beauty, answers with pride and indignation,

when the mountain-stream leaves her home for the ocean, who can obstruct her course?* At her command her maids and attendants, all valiant warriors, conceal or heighten their charms by donning armour and grasping the martial spear, and martial music proclaims the march of the beautious Amazons. Rama will not fight with women, he willingly and even respectfully lends a passage, and the radiant file of valour and beauty passes by, illumining the darkness of the night. Rama, struck with the sight, can scarcely believe that it was not a gorgeous dream.

In fine contrast to the spirited descriptions of the third book, the fourth is full of pathos and tenderness, and dwells on the woes of poor Sita, now a captive of Ravana. One lady alone of Ravana's family, Sarama, the wife of Bibhisan, sympathises with her, and repairs to her, and listens to her tales of former days. Sita narrates how after leaving Ayodhya with Rama and Lakshmana, she dwelt in the forest of Panchabati and enjoyed the forest life, how

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* রুষিলা দানব-বালা প্রমিলা রূপসী !
"কি কহিলি, বাসন্তী ? পর্ব্বতগৃহ ছাড়ি
বাহিরায় যবে নদী সিন্ধুর উদ্দেশে,
কার হেন সাধ্য যে সে রোধে তার গতি ?
দানব-নন্দিনী আমি, রক্ষঃ-কুল-বধূ,
রাবণ শ্বশুর মম, মেঘনাদ স্বামী,—
আমি কি ডরাই, সখী, ভিখারী রাঘবে ?
পশিব লঙ্কায় আজি নিজ ভুজ-বলে ;
দেখিব কেমনে মোরে নিবারে নৃমণি ?

wild flowers bloomed round her cottage and the sweet and joyous chirp of forest birds waked her every morning, how peacocks danced before her and wild deer came in herds as her guests, and how she hospitably entertained these innocent dwellers of the forest. She adorned herself by the margin of the lake with fresh flowers, and her dear lord, pleased with her new dress, would address her as the fairy of the woods! Will poor Sita meet her lord again and serve him with her affection?* The narrator can proceed no further, she

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* যথা গোমুখীর মুখ হইতে সুস্বনে
ঝরে পূত বারি-ধারা, কহিলা জানকী,
মধুরভাষিণী সতী আদরে সম্ভাষি
সরমারে,—"হিতৈষিণী সীতার পরমা
তুমি, সখী! পূর্ব্বকথা শুনিবারে যদি
ইচ্ছা তব, কহি আমি, শুন মন দিয়া।
"ছিনু মোরা, সুলোচনে, গোদাবরীতীরে
কপোত কপোতী যথা উচ্চ বৃক্ষ-চূড়ে
বাঁধি নীড় থাকে সুখে; ছিনু ঘোর বনে,
নাম পঞ্চবটী, মর্ত্ত্যে সুর-বন-সম।
সদা করিতেন সেবা লক্ষ্মণ সুমতি।
দণ্ডক ভাণ্ডার যার ভাবি দেখ মনে,
কিসের অভাব তার? যোগাতেন আনি
নিত্য ফল মূল বীর সৌমিত্রী; মৃগয়া
করিতেন কভু প্রভু; কিন্তু জীবনাশে
সতত বিরত সখি, রাঘবেন্দ্র বলী,—
দয়ার সাগর নাথ বিদিত জগতে!
ভুলিনু পূর্ব্বের সুখ। রাজার নন্দিনী,
রঘু-কুল-বধূ আমি, কিন্তু এ কাননে,
পাইনু, সরমা সই, পরম পিরীতি!
কুটীরের চারিদিকে কত যে ফুটিত

weeps bitter tears in woe. Sarama entreats her not to proceed further if those recollections give her pain, but poor Sita would fain proceed. The river filled by the rains pours forth its water on both sides, and the heart that is full of grief finds relief in imparting its grief to others. Sarama cannot choose

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ফুলকুল নিত্য নিত্য কহিব কেমনে ?
পঞ্চবটি-বন-চর মধু নিরবধি !
জাগাত প্রভাতে মোরে কুহরি সুস্বরে
পিক রাজ ! কোন রাণী কহ শশীমুখি,
হেন চিত্ত বিনোদন বৈতালিক গীতে
খোলে আঁখি ? শিখীসহ শিখিনী সুখিনী
নাচিত দুয়ারে মোর নর্ত্তক, নর্ত্তকী,
এ দোঁহার সম, রামা, আছে কি জগতে ?
অতিথি আসিত নিত্য করভ করভী,
মৃগ-শিশু, বিহঙ্গম, স্বর্ণ অঙ্গ কেহ,
কেহ শুভ্র, কেহ কাল, কেহ বা চিত্রিত,
যথা বাসবের ধনু ঘন-বর-শিরে ;
অহিংসক জীব যত। সেবিতাম সবে,
মহাদরে, পালিতাম পরম যতনে,
মরুভূমে স্রোতস্বতী তৃষাতুরে যথা,
আপনি সুজলবতী বারিদ প্রসাদে।
সরসী আরসী মোর ! তুলি কুবলয়ে
(অমূল্য রতন সম) পরিতাম কেশে ;
সাজিতাম ফুলসাজে ; হাসিতেন প্রভু,
বনদেবী বলি মোরে সম্ভাষি কৌতুকে।
হায়, সখী আর কি লো পাব প্রাণনাথে ?
আর কি এ পোড়া আঁখি এ ছার জনমে
দেখিবে সে পা দুখানি—আশার সরসে
রাজীব ; নয়নমণি ? হে দারুণ বিধি,
কি পাপে পাপী এ দাসী তোমার সমীপে" ?

but listen. In the forest of Panchabati, Sita heard the voice of fairies in sylvan sounds, and saw their dance in the glimmer of the sunbeams on the lake. Sometimes she would walk with Rama by the river, and view on her spacious bosom new heavens, new stars, new radiant moons. Sometimes she would climb a neighbouring hill, and there sit at the feet of Rama, even as a creeper winds round a tree. There she heard from him various discourses on sacred subjects, even as Uma hears the Vedas and the Puranas from the immortal lips of Siva on mount Kailasa. Will poor Sita hear the music of that voice again? Even now, in the solitude where she lives, she thinks she hears that voice,—will she never hear that music again? Thus Sita's story goes on. She narrates how in that forest Ravana went in the disguise of a beggar and stole her, how Jatayu obstructed his passage, how Sita fell into a swoon and dreamt a dream, how Ravana was victorious and brought Sita to Lanka.

In the fifth book, Maya, the goddess of illusion, sends a dream to Lakshmana. The vision comes to him in the guise of his mother, and asks him to worship Chandi at her temple situated in the north of Lanka. Lakshmana obeys, and Uma appears in person and blesses him. Meghanad also rises with the dawn from the embraces of Pramila, takes an affecting leave of his mother, and repairs to a temple to finish his devotions before going to war.

The sixth book describes the death of Meghanad, and is in our opinion about the weakest in the whole work. Rama has not the heart to let his brother go and

do battle with the terrible foe in the heart of Lanka, but at last consents. Lakshmana, dressed in celestial armour, and accompanied by Bibhisan, repairs to Lanka concealed by Maya from the eyes of all. Meghanad suddenly sees his foe in the house of worship, and mistakes him for a god in disguise, but Lakshmana soon undeceives him. He will not even allow Meghanad to don his armour or furnish himself with arms, but Meghanad strikes Lakshmana on the forehead with a cup, and Lakshmana falls into a swoon. Maya revives him, Meghanad is bewildered with strange sights by Maya, and Lakshmana kills him.* It is this portion of

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* ত্যজি ধনুঃ, নিষ্কোষিলা অসি মহাতেজাঃ
রামানুজ ; ঝলসিলা ফলক-আলোকে
নয়ন ! হায়রে অন্ধ অরিন্দম বলী
ইন্দ্রজিৎ খড়্গাঘাতে পড়িলা ভূতলে
শোণিতার্দ্র। থরথরি কাঁপিলা বসুধা,
গর্জ্জিলা উথলি সিন্ধু, ভৈরব আরবে
সহসা পুরিল বিশ্ব। ত্রিদিবে পাতালে,
মর্ত্ত্যে মরামর জীব প্রমাদ গণিলা
আতঙ্কে ! যথায় বসি হৈম সিংহাসনে
সভায় কর্ব্বুর পতি, সহসা পড়িল
কনক মুকুট খসি রথচূড় যথা,
রিপু রথী কাটি যবে পাড়ে রথতলে,
সশঙ্ক লঙ্কেশ শূর স্মরিলা শঙ্করে !
প্রমিলার বামেতর নয়ন নাচিল।
আত্মবিস্মৃতিতে হায় অকস্মাৎ সতী
মুছিলা সিন্দুর বিন্দু সুন্দর ললাটে !
মূর্চ্ছিলা রাক্ষসেন্দ্রানী মন্দোদরী দেবী
আচম্বিতে ! মাতৃকোলে নিদ্রায় কাঁদিল
শিশুকুল আর্ত্তনাদে।

the work which we regret the most. The death of Meghanad is not worthy of him. In his anxiety to magnify the prowess of his hero the poet forgets that Lakshmana himself is also a warrior. In the original *Ramayana*, Lakshmana kills Meghanad in fair fight. Our poet arms Lakshmana with celestial arms, conducts him with another warrior Bibhisan to meet Maghanad who is perfectly unprepared, and even then, Lakshmana is struck down. The poet forgets that the prowess of a warrior is set off best by representing his foeman as worthy of his steel, not by representing him as a child. Homer, from whom our poet frequently borrows his ideas, has not represented Hector as a child in order to adequately describe the prowess of Achilles.

The seventh book is in many respects the sublimest in the work. Siva, who is always inclined in favor of Ravana, is affected at the death of Meghanad, and sends a messenger to fill Ravana with his own prowess to give him a day for revenge. The minor gods descend in a body to assist Rama, nor is he unworthy of celestial assistance. Indra gazes on Rama as on a rival king of the heavens, and Kartikeya sees his own image in the young and bold Lakshmana! Ravana's few dignified yet affecting words to the bereaved mother of Meghanad, his address to his army, the spirited conduct and reply of his troops, and the stirring description of the battle that ensues, find no parallel in the literature of Bengal. Nowhere, except in the pages of Homer, has battle between more than mortal combatants been so vividly, so powerfully

described. Ravana is intent on killing Lakshmana, the slayer of his son, and vain are the attempts to resist his course. Indra, the king of the heavens, cannot hurl his thunder, for a higher power checks him; and Kartikeya retires wounded and smiling when it is whispered to him that Siva has filled Ravana with his own prowess. Rama comes forward, but Ravana wants his brother Lakshmana and will not fight with the elder brother. Hanuman, Sugriva, and the other leaders of Rama's forces quail before Ravana, till the latter at last finds out Lakshmana fighting like a young lion, and they both eagerly mingle in a dubious combat. Gods and men gaze with wonder on the furious battle, and Ravana himself in the midst of the combat pauses in admiration of the valour and prowess of his young and undaunted foe. But none can oppose Ravana to-day, and Lakshmana falls as a falling star, the celestial arms sounding at his fall.*

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* পলাইল সত্রাসে চৌদিকে
রঘুসৈন্য, (জল যথা জাঙ্গাল ভাঙ্গিলে
কোলাহলে) ; দেবদল, তেজোহীন এবে,
পলাইলা নরসহ, ধূমসহ যথা
যায় উড়ি অগ্নিকণা বহিলে প্রবলে
পবন। সম্মুখে রক্ষঃ হেরিলা লক্ষ্মণে
দেবাকৃতি! বীরমদে দুর্ম্মদ সমরে
রাবণ; নাদিলা বলী হুহুঙ্কার রবে,
নাদিলা সৌমিত্রি শূর নির্ভয় হৃদয়ে,
নাদে যথা মত্তকরী মত্তকরি নাদে!
দেবদত্ত ধনুঃ ধন্বী টঙ্কারিলা রোষে।
"এতক্ষণে রে লক্ষ্মণ" কহিলা সরোষে
রাবণ "এ রণক্ষেত্রে পাইনু কি তোরে,

Who shall describe the woes of Rama on the dreadful night after the battle, when Lakshmana lay with other great warriors dead on the field? The eighth book commences with this touching scene. Stars twinkle

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নরাধম ? কোথা এবে দেব বজ্রপাণি,
শিখিধ্বজ শক্তিধর ? রঘুকুলপতি
ভ্রাতা তোর ? কোথা রাজা সুগ্রীব ? কে তোরে
রক্ষিবে পামর আজি ? এ আসন্ন কালে
সুমিত্রা জননী তোর কলত্র উর্ম্মিলা,
ভাব দোঁহে ! মাংস তোর মাংসাহারী জীবে
দিব এবে ; রক্তস্রোত শুষিবে ধরণী !
কুক্ষণে সাগর পার হইলি দুর্ম্মতি,
পশিলি রাক্ষসালয়ে চোরবেশ ধরি,
হরিলি রাক্ষসরত্ন অমূল্য জগতে।"
গর্জ্জিলা ভৈরবে রাজা বসাইয়া চাপে
অগ্নিশিখা সম শর ; ভীম সিংহনাদে
উত্তরিলা ভীমনাদী সৌমিত্রি কেশরী,
"ক্ষত্রকুলে জন্ম মম, রক্ষকুলপতি,
নাহি ডরি যমে আমি ; কেন ডরাইব
তোমায় ; আকুল তুমি পুত্র শোকে আজি
যথাসাধ্য কর রথি। আশু নিবারিব
শোক তব, প্রেরি তোমা পুত্রবর যথা"
বাজিল তুমুল রণ, চাহিলা বিস্ময়ে
দেব নর দোহা পানে ; কাটিলা সৌমিত্রি
শরজাল মুহুর্মুহুঃ হুহুঙ্কার রবে।
সবিস্ময়ে রক্ষরাজ কহিলা, "বাখানি
বীরপণা তোর আমি সৌমিত্রি কেশরী !
শক্তিধরাধিক শক্তি ধরিস্ সুরথী
তুই ; কিন্তু নাহি রক্ষা আজি মোর হাতে"
স্মরি পুত্রবরে শূর হানিলা সরোষে
মহাশক্তি ! বজ্রনাদে উঠিলা গর্জ্জিয়া,
উজ্জ্বলি অম্বর দেশ সৌদামিনী রূপে,

in the sky, the battle-field is lighted by fires here and there, and Rama bemoans the death of Lakshmana, the companion of all his toils, the affectionate brother who had left his home, his wife, and his kingdom to attend on him. Uma is affected, and with the permission of her lord Siva, she sends Maya to take Rama to the realm of shades, where Rama's father will tell him the means of reviving Lakshmana to life. The poet borrows from Homer as well from Hindu mythology in his description of hell. Maya takes Rama through regions where sinners are punished after death. He then passes over to those happy regions where the good and virtuous live after death. There he meets his father who tells him of a medicine by which Lakshmana is eventually brought back to life.

The last book describes the funeral of Meghanad. A truce of seven days is granted by Rama at Ravana's request. Pramila mounts the pyre with the corpse of her lord after taking an affecting farewell of her maids and companions, and Ravana bursts into an exclamation of bitter, heart-felt grief, at the loss of the bravest of his warriors and the dearest of his sons.*

ভীষণ রিপুনাশিনী ! কাঁপিলা সভয়ে
দেব, নর ! ভীমাঘাতে পড়িল ভূতলে
লক্ষ্মণ নক্ষত্র যথা ; বাজিল ঝনঝনি
দেব অস্ত্র, রক্তস্রোতে আভাহীন এবে।

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* অগ্রসরি রক্ষরাজ কহিলা কাতরে ;
"ছিল আশা মেঘনাদ, মুদিব অন্তিমে

Other Poets.

Ranga Lal Banerji was a contemporary of Madhu Sudan, and his first work, *Padminir Upakhyan* came out in the same year with Madhu Sudan's first work, *Sarmishtha*, in 1858. It is a spirited poem on a well-known episode of Rajput history, and was much admired. It was followed by his *Karmadevi* and *Surasundari*;

এ নয়নদ্বয় আমি তোমার সম্মুখে ;—
সঁপি রাজ্যভার, পুত্র, তোমায়, করিব
মহাযাত্রা ! কিন্তু বিধি, বুঝিব কেমনে
তার লীলা ? ভাড়াইলা সে সুখ আমারে !
ছিল আশা রক্ষকুল রাজ সিংহাসনে
জুড়াইব আঁখি, বৎস, দেখিয়া তোমারে,
বামে রক্ষকুল লক্ষ্মী রক্ষোরাণী রূপে
পুত্রবধূ ! বৃথা আশা ! পূর্ব্ব জন্ম ফলে
হেরি তোমা দোঁহে আজি একাল আসনে !
কর্ব্বরি-গৌরব-রবি চির রাহুগ্রাসে !
সেবিনু শিবেরে আমি বহু যত্ন করি,
লভিতে কি এই ফল ? কেমনে ফিরিব
হায়রে, কে কবে মোরে, ফিরিব কেমনে
শূন্য লঙ্কাধামে আর ? কি সান্ত্বনাচ্ছলে
সান্ত্বনিব মায়ে তব, কে কবে আমারে,—
কোথা পুত্র, পুত্রবধূ আমার ? সুধিবে
যবে রাণী মন্দোদরী,—কি সুখে আইলে
রাখি দোঁহে সিন্ধুতীরে, রক্ষকুলপতি ?
কি কয়ে বুঝাব তারে, হায়রে কি কয়ে ?
হা পুত্র ! হা বীরশ্রেষ্ঠ ! চিরজয়ী রণে
হা মাতঃ রাক্ষস লক্ষ্মি ! কি পাপে লিখিলা
এ পীড়া দারুণ বিধি রাবণের ভালে ?"

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but the fame of the poet was soon eclipsed by the brighter star of Madhu Sudan's genius. Ranga Lal died in 1887.

Among the many poets who are still spared to us, and who continue to enrich the Bengali language, we must single out three who stand pre-eminent. Hem Chandra Banerji is the Nestor among the living poets, and was born in 1838. His spirited verse, full of fire and of feeling, won the admiration of the reading public even when the fame of Madhu Sudan was in the ascendant; his patriotic Lyric on India is known by heart to a large circle of readers, and his more ambitious epic, *Britra Sanhar*, is instinct with beauty. But perhaps Nabin Chandra Sen has struck a still deeper chord in the hearts of his countrymen. His first great work, *Palasir Juddha*, came like a surprise and a joy to his countrymen, and pleased the reading public by its freshness and vigour and its voluptuous sweetness. His great epic on Krishna is still in progress; and his last work *Amitabha* on the life and teachings of Buddha, somewhat after the style of Arnold's *Light of Asia*, sustains and enhances the reputation of the great poet of the Hindu revival of the present day. And lastly, Rabindra Nath Tagore, youngest son of the venerable Debendra Nath Tagore, has distinguished himself in poetry, drama and fiction, and his matchless songs are sung in every cultured home in Bengal. Some other poets have also distinguished themselves by their talent and genius. Pandit Siva Nath Sastri's *Nirbasiter Bilap* is a work of great merit, feeling and pathos. Ananda Chandra Mitra is an eccentric genius, and his *Helena Kabya* and

Mitra Kabya are written with feeling in forcible verse. Krishna Chandra Mazumdar's *Sadbhab Satak* is a well-known and meritorious work. And Behari Lal Chakrabarti's *Banga Sundari* and other poems display power and feeling. A host of other writers have written meritorious works too numerous to mention.

It is a sign of the times that female writers have within the last ten or fifteen years entered within the arena of Bengali poetry. Foremost among them should be mentioned the name of Srimati Kamini Sen, now Mrs. K. N. Rai. Her beautiful verses collected under the name of *Alo-o-Chhaya*, (Light and Shade), pourtray the dignity of suffering and of work with a delicacy of touch and depth of feeling which are remarkable. Srimati Man Kumari's *Kusumanjali* is a work of merit. Srimati Girindra Mohini Datta followed with her *Asrukana*, in which the unutterable woes of a Hindu widow are pourtrayed by one who has felt them, and can express them with power and with eloquence. To the same class belongs the poetry of Rani Mrinalini of Paikpara, whose *Nirjharini* is a marvel from the pen of a young widow of sixteen. Lines like those quoted below* strike a

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* দুস্তর এ ভবনদী
কাহার ধরিব হাত,
এ দুর্গম বন পথে
কে যাবে আমার সাথ।

প্রতিদিন চেয়ে দেখি
ভাসিয়া সংসার স্রোতে ;
কত কাজে, কি উদ্দেশে
কত লোক চলে পথে।

কেহ তারা একা নয়,
সবারই দোসর আছে ;
হাত ধরাধরি করি
সোৎসাহে চলিয়াছে।

উদ্দেশ্য উৎসাহ হীন
আমি এক প্রান্তে পড়ে
কে হাত বাড়ায়ে দেবে
আমারে করুণা করে।

cord in every feeling heart, and display a depth of despair and an eloquent simplicity of real sorrow, which our greatest poets can scarcely excel.

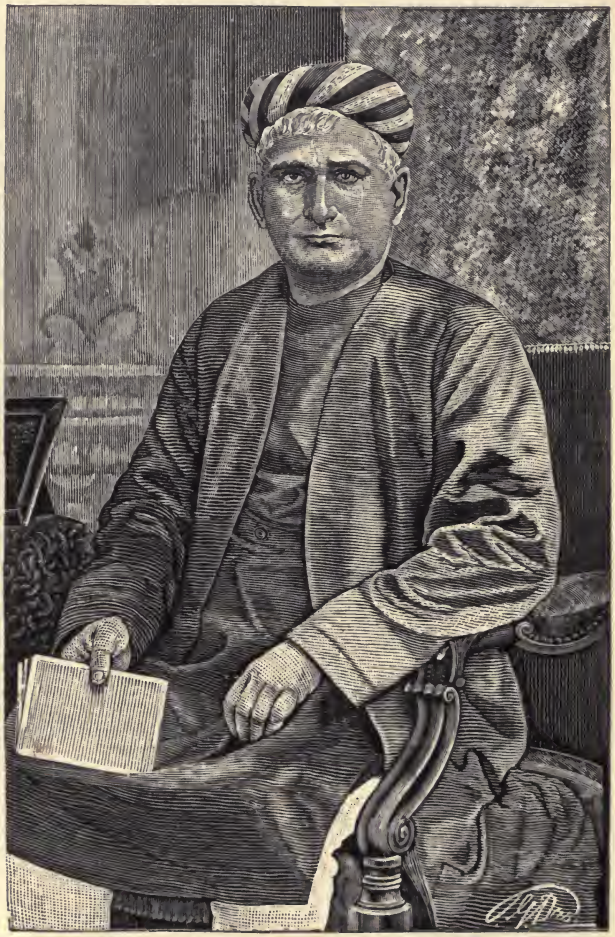
Thus the first emotion which has inspired our poetesses, and to which they have given eloquent expression, is one of suffering, of sorrow for the dead, of duty towards the living. These are sacred feelings which most forcibly to the female mind, and naturally enough our poetesses have received their first inspiration from these feelings. We welcome them in the field of literature and poetry, and we hope that as years roll by, and as they take an increasing share of literary work on themselves, they will also take a larger and more comprehensive view of life with all its varied feelings and hopes, joys and sorrows. For real life in its widest manifestation and its deepest meaning is the truest poetry,—real life, painted in those colours which gleam from the heaven of the poet's imagination, and turn the veriest dew drops into pearls !

সঙ্গী হীন সুখ হীন
এ বিজনে পড়ে আছি ;
দুয়ারে দাঁড়ায়ে ভাই
তোদের প্রসাদ যাচি।

যদিও একেলা আমি
তোমরা ত পর নও ;
পিতার সন্তান যদি,
আমার ত ভাই হও।

দেখ চেয়ে স্নেহ বিনা
একটী ভগিনী মরে,
ধর অভাগীর হাত
তোমরা করুণা করে।

সাথে লও তোমাদের
এ বিস্তীর্ণ কর্ম্মপথে,
ভেসে যেন নাই যাই
শুধুই সংসার স্রোতে।



Bankim Chandra Chatterjea.

CHAPTER XIX.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjea and his Novels.

1838-1894.

Bankim Chandra is in prose what Madhu Sudan is in verse,—the founder of a new style, the exponent of a new idea. In creative imagination, in gorgeous description, in power to conceive and in skill to describe, Madhu Sudan and Bankim Chandra stand apart from the other writers of the century; they are the first, the second is nowhere. And if the poet's conceptions are more lofty and more sublime, the novelist's creations are more varied, have more of human interest, and appeal more touchingly to our softer emotions. The palm must be given to the poet who has bodied forth beings of heaven and earth and the lower regions in gorgeous verse which sprang into existence like an echo to his ideas; but the reader, after he has traversed the universe on the wings of the mighty poet, will descend with a sense of pleasure to the homely scenes of the novelist, peopled with figures and faces so true and life-like, so sparkling and animated, so rich in their variety and beauty, that they seem to be a world by themselves, created by the will of the great enchanter!

Bankim Chandra was born in 1838, in the same year with the poet Hem Chandra Banerjea. He was the son of Jadab Chandra Chatterjea, who served Government

for many years as Deputy Collector, and then retired on pension. Bankim Chandra was educated in the Hooghly College and then in the Presidency College of Calcutta. The Calcutta University was now founded, and Bankim Chandra obtained his degree, and was the first of two B. A. in India.

In his early years, he with Dina Bandhu Mitra served apprenticeship in the *Prabhakar* journal under the veteran Iswar Chandra Gupta, and Bankim Chandra no doubt acquired much of his ease and facility of writing from this early exercise. Shortly after he had passed his B. A. Examination, he was appointed a Deputy Collector, and he served in different districts. But literary ambition was his ruling passion, and he laboured to achieve something new and great in prose as Madhu Sudan had done in verse. Both were inspired by European models but were sustained by their own genius, and both of them thoroughly assimilated new ideas with the spirit of their country's thought and literature. Madhu Sudan wrote a thoroughly Hindu epic, though inspired by Homer, and Bankim Chandra wrote novels of Hindu life, though his imagination was fired by the wonderful creations of the prince of modern novelists, Sir Walter Scott.

In 1864, appeared his first historical novel *Durges-Nandini*, and the literary world in Bengal was taken by surprise, as it had been three years before, on the publication of *Meghanad*. The boldness of the conception, the skill and grace of the execution, and the variety and richness and surpassing freshness of the figures which live and move and act in this wonderful work, indicated

a creative genius of the highest order. Nothing so bold and original had been attempted in Bengali prose, nothing so powerful and so life-like had been executed in Bengali fiction. The venerable Vidyasagar had published his greatest work, *Sitar Banabas*, only two years before, and the work was an adaptation of a Sanscrit drama into Bengali prose. Within two years a new epoch seemed to have dawned on the horizon of Bengali prose literature,—an epoch of original works of the imagination, the like of which Bengal had not known before.

Bankim Chandra did not escape the ridicule which greets every new endeavour. Critics and disappointed writers poured forth their rage on the devoted head of the young author, his style, his conceptions, his story, were all condemned, and he was put down as a denationalized writer, an imitator of European models. But censure and invectives pass off, and a work of real genius stands unmoved like a rock rising above the waves. And after thirty years, the reading public of Bengal acknowledge *Durges-Nandini* to be one of the greatest works in Bengali literture.

The nineteenth century has indeed been a bright century for Bengali literature. But if we were called upon to point out the brightest decade within this century, we should unhesitatingly point to the ten years from 1854 to 1864. More original work, more substantial and lasting work, was done within that decade than either before or after. The eminent Vidyasagar inaugurated the great widow-marriage movement, and also published his

greatest work, *Sitar Bánabas*, within this decade. Ram Narayan Tarkaratna began and Dina Bandhu Mitra completed the inauguration of the modern Bengali drama within these years. Madhu Sudan erected his monumental epic in blank verse, and Bankim Chandra founded his new school of fiction, within this memorable decade. It seems as if the literary activity of the century reached its culminating point in the decade closing in 1864. All the best works of the best writers, Vidyasagar, Dina Bandhu, Madhu Sudan and Bankim Chandra were crowded within those ten years.

Having won his spurs by his first endeavour, Bankim Chandra did let the grass grow under his feet. The weird and wild story of *Kapala Kundala* is perhaps a more wonderful creation of the writer's fancy than even his first great work. And *Mrinalini* which followed, although less sustained than its predecessors, is enlivened by some characters which only a true poet can conceive.

Eight years had now elapsed since the publication of *Durges-Nandini*, and in 1872, Bankim Chandra formed the idea of issuing a first class literary magazine in Bengali. The *Banga Darsan* was accordingly started, and under the editorship of Bankim Chandra, this new magazine rapidly rose in popularity and in fame.

The literary activity of Bankim knew no bounds. Turning aside from his favorite historical romances, Bankim Chandra began to publish in the *Banga Darsan* a social tale which soon attracted thousands of readers.

Bisha Brikkha is the first and most powerful of Bankim Chandra's social novels. Beside this story, continued in the magazine from month to month, other articles animated by wit or replete with information of the most varied kind, and all written in Bankim Chandra's matchless style, soon made the *Banga Darsan* the most popular as it was the most ably written journal of the day. Bankim Chandra now became the sole king of the literary world as Iswar Chandra Gupta had been in an early part of the century, and his long rule continued for over twenty years till the day of his death. During this period Bankim Chandra had no equal and no rival. Madhu Sudan and Dina Bandhu died in 1873. Akhay Kumar and Vidyasagar had practically retired from literary work. Hem Chandra's greatest and best works had already appeared, and the sound of his harp was now rarely heard. And the younger generation of writers and poets looked up with veneration to the great author of *Durges Nandini* and *Bisha Brikkha*, and submitted to his literary sway. Many of them wrote in the *Banga Darsan*, many profited by his example, advice and help, all owned him as their king.*

* It was in 1872, when the *Banga Darsan* was started, that Bankim Chandra suggested to me to write in my native tongue. As the incident throws some light on Bankim Chandra's zeal for his country's literature, the reader will pardon my narrating it. Bankim Chandra was a young Deputy Collector when my father, twenty years his senior, was an honoured and experienced Deputy Collector and was meditating retirement from service. Bankim Chandra was often in the same district with my father, regarded

Novels, social and historical, now came out in rapid succession from the fertile pen of the great writer, and his style, always rich and harmonious, became more and more simple and perfect with age. His *Debi Chaudhurani* and *Ananda Matha* and *Krishta Kanter Will* and other novels, his lighter tales sparkling with the richest humour, and his social, historical and critical essays instinct with thought, found thousands of readers all over Bengal. Whatever he touched glowed with the light of his genius. For a generation the reading world feasted on his unceasing productions; Bengali ladies in their zenana bought every new work of Bankim Chandra as it issued from the press, and

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him with the highest respect, and lamented his death, when my father died in the performance of public duty in 1861, like that of an elder and honoured relation. Bankim Chandra always took an interest in me, ten years his junior, and tried to enlist me in the cause of vernacular literature. It was in 1872, when we were talking about the *Banga Darsan*, that I happened to express my appreciation of some of the characters of Bankim's novels. "If you appreciate Bengali literature thus," said the veteran novelist, "why do you not work for it?" "I, write in Bengali!" said I with some surprise, "why, I have never written anything in Bengali. I do not know the Bengali style." "Style!" said he, "why, what a man of your education will write will be Bengali style, and your cultured feelings will do the rest." "You will never live by your writings in English," said he on this or on another occasion, "look at others. Your uncles Gobind Chandra and Shashi Chandra and Madhu Sudan Datta were the best educated men of the Hindu College in their day. Govind Chandra and Shashi Chandra's English poems will never live, Madhu Sudan's Bengali poetry will live as long as the Bengali language will live." These words created a deep impression in me, and two years after this conversation, my first Bengali work, *Banga Bijeta*, was out in 1874. When that work was issuing in another Bengali magazine, Bankim Chandra's *Chandra Sekhar* was appearing in the *Banga Darsan*. He wrote to me of my rival work with his utmost good feeling, and once wrote humorously, "I am crowding my canvas with characters;—it won't do for a veteran like me to be beaten by a youngster!"

young men in schools and colleges knew his latest utterances by-heart.*

In his later years, he began to write on religious

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* The following passage from *Indira* is a fair specimen of Bankim Chandra's later and simpler style of Bengali prose.

অনেক দিনের পর আমি শ্বশুর বাড়ী যাইতেছিলাম। আমি উনিশ বৎসরে পড়িয়াছিলাম, তথাপি এ পর্য্যন্ত শ্বশুরের ঘর করি নাই। তাহার কারণ, আমার পিতা ধনী, শ্বশুর দরিদ্র। বিবাহের কিছু দিন পরেই শ্বশুর আমাকে লইতে লোক পাঠাইয়াছিলেন, কিন্তু পিতা পাঠাইলেন না; বলিলেন, "বিহাইকে বলিও, যে, আগে আমার জামাতা উপার্জ্জন করিতে শিখুক—তার পর বধূ লইয়া যাইবেন—এখন আমার মেয়ে লইয়া গিয়া খাওয়াইবেন কি?" শুনিয়া আমার স্বামীর মনে বড় ঘৃণা জন্মিল—তাঁহার বয়স তখন ২০ বৎসর, তিনি প্রতিজ্ঞা করিলেন, যে স্বয়ং অর্থোপার্জ্জন করিয়া পরিবার প্রতিপালন করিবেন। এই ভাবিয়া তিনি পশ্চিমাঞ্চলে যাত্রা করিলেন। তখন রেইল হয় নাই—পশ্চিমের পথ অতি দুর্গম ছিল। তিনি পদব্রজে, বিনা অর্থে, বিনা সহায়ে, সেই পথ অতিবাহিত করিয়া, পঞ্জাবে গিয়া উপস্থিত হইলেন। যে ইহা পারে, সে অর্থোপার্জ্জন করিতেও পারে। স্বামী অর্থোপার্জ্জন করিতে লাগিলেন—বাড়ীতে টাকা পাঠাইতে লাগিলেন—কিন্তু সাত আট বৎসর বাড়ী আসিলেন না, বা আমার কোন সংবাদ লইলেন না। আমার যে সময়ের ইতিহাস আরম্ভ করিতেছি, তাহার কিছু পূর্ব্বে তিনি বাড়ী আসিলেন। রব উঠিল যে, তিনি কমিসেরিয়েটের (কমিসেরিয়েট্ বটে ত?) কর্ম্ম করিয়া অতুল ঐশ্বর্য্যের অধিপতি হইয়া আসিয়াছেন। আমার শ্বশুর আমার পিতাকে লিখিয়া পাঠাইলেন, "আপনার আশীর্ব্বাদে উপেন্দ্র (আমার স্বামীর নাম উপেন্দ্র—নাম ধরিলাম, প্রাচীনারা মার্জ্জনা করিবেন; হাল আইনে তাঁহাকে "আমার উপেন্দ্র" বলিয়া ডাকাই সম্ভব)—বধূমাতাকে প্রতিপালন করিতে সক্ষম। পাল্কী বেহারা পাঠাইলাম, বধূমাতাকে এ বাটীতে পাঠাইয়া দিবেন। নচেৎ আজ্ঞা করিলে পুত্রের বিবাহের আবার সম্বন্ধ করিব।"

পিতা দেখিলেন, নূতন বড়মানুষ বটে। পাল্কী খানার ভিতরে কিংখাপ মোড়া, উপরে রূপার বিট, বাঁটে রূপার হাঙ্গরের মুখ। দাসী মাগী যে আসিয়াছিল, সে গরদ পরিয়া আসিয়াছে, গলায় বড় মোটা সোনার দানা। চারিজন কালো দাড়িওয়ালা ভোজপুরে পাল্কীর সঙ্গে আসিয়াছিল।

subjects. His great work on Krishna is written on the same lines as the thoughtful English work *Ecce Homo*,

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আমার পিতা হরমোহন দত্ত বুনিয়াদি বড়মানুষ। হাসিয়া বলিলেন, "মা ইন্দিরে! আর তোমাকে রাখিতে পারি না। এখন যাও, আবার শীঘ্র লইয়া আসিব। দেখ, আঙ্গুল ফুলে কলাগাছ দেখিয়া হাসিও না।"

Bankim Chandra's opinion on the question of the remarriage of Hindu widows is thus explained in his essays on *Samya* or Equality.

আমরা বলিব, বিধবাবিবাহ ভালও নহে, মন্দও নহে; সকল বিধবার বিবাহ হওয়া কদাচ ভাল নহে, তবে বিধবাগণের ইচ্ছামত বিবাহে অধিকার থাকা ভাল। যে স্ত্রী সাধ্বী, পূর্ব্বপতিকে আন্তরিক ভাল বাসিয়াছিল, সে কখনই পুনর্ব্বার পরিণয় করিতে ইচ্ছা করে না; যে জাতিগণের মধ্যে বিধবাবিবাহ প্রচলিত আছে, সে সকল জাতির মধ্যেও পবিত্র স্বভাববিশিষ্টা, স্নেহময়ী, সাধ্বীগণ বিধবা হইলে কদাপি আর বিবাহ করে না। কিন্তু যদি কোন বিধবা, হিন্দুই হউন, আর যে জাতীয়া হউন, পতির লোকান্তর পরে পুনঃপরিণয়ে ইচ্ছাবতী হয়েন, তবে তিনি অবশ্য তাহাতে অধিকারিণী। * *

আর একটী কথা আছে। অনেকে মনে করেন, যে চিরবৈধব্য বন্ধনে, হিন্দু মহিলাদিগের পাতিব্রত্য এরূপ দৃঢ়বদ্ধ, যে তাহার অন্যথা কামনা করা বিধেয় নহে। হিন্দু স্ত্রীমাত্রেই জানেন, যে এই এক স্বামীর সঙ্গে সঙ্গে তাঁহার সকল সুখ যাইবে, অতএব তিনি স্বামীর প্রতি অনন্ত ভক্তিমতী। এই সম্প্রদায়ের লোকের বিবেচনায় এই জন্যই হিন্দুগৃহে দাম্পত্য সুখের এত আধিক্য। কথাটি সত্য বলিয়াই না হয় স্বীকার করিলাম। যদি তাই হয়, তবে নিয়মটী একতরফা রাখ কেন? বিধবার চিরবৈধব্য যদি সমাজের মঙ্গলকর হয়, তবে মৃতভার্য্য পুরুষের চিরপত্নীহীনতা বিধান কর না কেন? তুমি মরিলে, তোমার স্ত্রীর আর গতি নাই, এজন্য তোমার স্ত্রী অধিকতর প্রেমশালিনী; সেইরূপ তোমার স্ত্রী মরিলে, তোমারও আর গতি হইবে না, যদি, এমন নিয়ম হয়, তবে তুমিও অধিকতর প্রেমশালী হইবে। এবং দাম্পত্য সুখ, গার্হস্থ সুখ দ্বিগুণ বৃদ্ধি হইবে। কিন্তু তোমার বেলা সে নিয়ম খাটে না কেন? কেবল অবলা স্ত্রীর বেলা সে নিয়ম কেন? * *

স্ত্রীগণের বিষয়াধিকার সম্বন্ধে একটী কৌতুকাবহ ব্যাপার মনে পড়িল। কয়বৎসর পূর্ব্বে হাইকোর্টে একটী মোকদ্দমা হইয়া গিয়াছে। বিচার্য্য

and created a profound sensation in Bengal. Krishna; not as a deity but as a man, as the great Yadava chief who tried to avert war by his wise counsels and ever helped the cause of virtue,—this was the theme of his work. And he proved to the perplexity of his orthodox countrymen that the story of the amours of Krishna finds no mention in the earliest works in Sanscrit literature, and is the mischievous fabrication of later poets. He

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বিষয় এই অসতী স্ত্রী, বিষয়াধিকারিণী হইতে পারে কি না। বিচারক অনুমতি করিলেন, পারে। শুনিয়া দেশে হুলস্থুল পড়িয়া গেল। যা! এতকালে হিন্দুস্ত্রীর সতীত্ব ধর্ম্ম লুপ্ত হইল! আর কেহ সতীত্বধর্ম্ম রক্ষা করিবে না! বাঙ্গালি সমাজ পয়সা খরচ করিতে চাহে না—রাজাজ্ঞা নহিলে চাঁদায় সহি করে না, কিন্তু এ লাঠি এমনি মর্ম্মস্থানে বাজিয়াছিল যে হিন্দুগণ আপনা হইতেই চাঁদাতে সহি করিয়া, প্রিবিকৌন্সিলে আপীল করিতে উদ্যত! প্রধান প্রধান সংবাদপত্র, "হা সতীত্ব! কোথায় গেলি" বলিয়া ইংরেজি সাঙ্গালা সুরে রোদন করিয়া, "ওরে চাঁদা দে!" বলিয়া ডাকিতে লাগিলেন। শেষটা কি হইয়াছে জানি না, কেন না দেশী সংবাদ-পত্র পাঠসুখে আমরা ইচ্ছাক্রমে বঞ্চিত। কিন্তু যাহাই হৌক, যাঁহারা এই বিচার অতি ভয়ঙ্কর ব্যাপার মনে করিয়াছিলেন, তাঁহাদিগকে আমাদিগের একটী কথা জিজ্ঞাস্য আছে। স্বীকার করি, অসতী স্ত্রী বিষয়ে বঞ্চিত হওয়াই বিধেয়, তাহা হইলে অসতীত্ব পাপ বড় শাসিত থাকে; কিন্তু সেই সঙ্গে আর একটী বিধান হইলে ভাল হয় না, যে লম্পট পুরুষ অথবা যে পুরুষ পত্নী ভিন্ন অন্য নারীর সংসর্গ করিয়াছে, সেও বিষয়াধিকারে অক্ষম হইবে? বিষয়ে বঞ্চিত হইবার ভয় দেখাইয়া স্ত্রীদিগকে সতী করিতে চাও—সেই ভয় দেখাইয়া পুরুষগণকে সৎপথে রাখিতে চাও না কেন? ধর্ম্মভ্রষ্টা স্ত্রী বিষয় পাইবে না; ধর্ম্মভ্রষ্ট পুরুষ বিষয় পাইবে কেন? ধর্ম্মভ্রষ্ট পুরুষ,—যে লম্পট, যে চোর, যে মিথ্যাবাদী, যে মদ্যপায়ী, যে কৃতঘ্ন, সে সকলেই বিষয় পাইবে, কেন না সে পুরুষ; কেবল অসতী বিষয় পাইবে না, কেন না সে স্ত্রী! ইহা যদি ধর্ম্মশাস্ত্র, তবে অধর্ম্মশাস্ত্র কি? ইহা যদি আইন, তবে বেআইন কি? এই আইন রক্ষার্থ চাঁদা তোলা যদি দেশ-বাৎসল্য, তবে মহাপাতক কেমনতর?

also took up the study of the Vedas, and felt himself instinctively drawn to the Hindu revival of the present generation, not to the noisy revival of ceremonials and forms and hurtful rules, but to the revival of the purer deeper and more catholic monotheism of the Hindus which alone can unite and strengthen the nation.

Bankim Chandra was made a Rai Bahadur, and a Companion of the Indian Empire by the Government, and died in 1894, lamented by his countrymen. Why is it that so few of our literary men live to the age of three score and ten ? Ram Mohan Rai died at 59; Iswar Chandra Gupta at 49 ; Dina Bandhu Mitra at 44; Madhu Sudan Datta at 49 ; and Bankim Chandra at 56. The fathers of Bengali prose literature, Akhay Kumar Datta and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar lived approximately to the full period of human life, probably because they retired from labours early, and passed their old age in repose. Akhay Kumar died at 66 and Vidyasagar at 71.

These were the kings of our literary world in the present century, and the curious reader can mark the periods of their reign as precisely as the reigns of political sovereigns. I. Ram Mohan Rai reigned from 1815 to 1830, Raja Radha Kanta sharing his reign and ruling over the orthodox section. II. Iswar Chandra Gupta then reigned from 1830 to 1855, Akhay Kumar sharing his rule during the last twelve years. III. The venerable Vidyasagar then ascended the throne with his memorable movement for the re-marriage of Hindu widows, and his rule lasted till 1872, Madhu Sudan

and Dina Bandhu and Bankim Chandra sharing the rule. IV. And after a brief and regrettable war over the question of the abolition of polygamy, Vidyasagar abdicated the throne; Madhu Sudan and Dina Bandhu also died in 1873; and Bankim became the sole ruler, and reigned over the literary world for twenty two years.

Other Writers.

The stream of Bengali literature has broadened within the last thirty years, since the date of *Durges Nandini*, and it is difficult within our limits to give any account of this progress and development. The plan which we have pursued in the present work is to confine our remarks to the works only of the leading writers, and to briefly enumerate others who were their collaborators or contemporaries. We will follow this plan in the present chapter.

Magazines. Literary magazines, some of great merit, have multiplied since the days of the *Banga Darsan*, but have mostly been short-lived. The *Ganankur*, the *Arya Darsan*, the *Bandhab*, the *Naba Jiban* and the *Prachar* were excellent magazines, but have ceased to exist. The *Bharati*, the *Nabya Bharat*, the *Sahitya*, the *Sadhana* and the *Janmabhumi* are among the best magazines of the present day. The first named journal is conducted by a lady, Srimati Sarna Kumari Ghosal, daughter of the venerable Debendra Nath Tagore.

NOVELS. The same lady is the author of *Dip Nirban* and a number of other meritorious novels, and it is a sign of the times that ladies have taken to writing works of fiction as well as of poetry. Sanjib Chandra Chatterjea, brother of the gifted Bankim Chandra, has written *Madhabilata*, *Kanthamala* and other interesting novels, and Chandra Sekhar Mukerji's *Udbhranta Prem* is also a well-known work. One of the best of modern novels is *Swarnalata* by the late Tarak Chandra Ganguli, a simple and pathetic tale of social life in which the characters are powerfully delineated. Indra Nath Banerjea's *Kalpataru* is a humorous but realistic novel of Bengal village life. Damodar Vidyananda has written *Mrinmayi* and a number of other stories, Chandi Charan Banerjea has composed *Monorama's Griha* and other moral domestic tales, and Chandi Charan Sen has published *Nanda Kumar* and other historical novels of orthodox proportions. Pandit Siva Nath Sastri, who has distinguished himself by his poetry and his religious works, has also composed *Mejo Bau* and other meritorious works of fiction; and Rabindra Nath Tagore, one of the foremost poets of the day, has composed short tales which bear the stamp of his genius. Debi Prasanna Rai Chowdhuri has written a number of interesting tales; and the veteran dramatist Mano Mohan Basu has written a meritorious tale about Ranjit Sinha, called *Dulin*. To complete the list, mention may be made of *Banga Bijeta* and three other tales of Indian History by the present writer, as well as his social novels, *Sansar* and *Samaj*.

ESSAYS. Bankim Chandra's thoughtful essays in the *Banga Darsan* on literary, social and scientific subjects were largely read by his countrymen all over Bengal, and the example he set has been largely followed. Foremost among the essayists of the present day is Kali Prasanna Ghosh of Dacca, whose *Prabhat Chinta* and *Nibhrita Chinta* and other thoughtful essays are widely read and appreciated. Raj Krishna Mukerjea and Chandra Nath Basu were among the most eminent of Bankim Chandra's collaborators, and have written much that is valuable and thoughtful. Raj Krishna was a man of accurate scholarship and learning, and his *Prabandhas* are marked by a spirit of honest research. Chandra Nath Basu has distinguished himself more by his critical and social essays, like his *Sakuntala Tatwa* and his *Hindutwa.* Dwijendra Nath Tagore, son of the venerable Debendra Nath Tagore, has written much that is philosophical and thoughtful in his *Tatwa Prakas* and other essays. Other writers of lesser note are adding to the stock of our current prose literature.

RELIGION AND ANTIQUITIES. The Asiatic Society continues to publish meritorious editions of ancient Sanscrit works, and many private Pandits and Editors are engaged in the same patriotic task. Our concern however is with Bengali translations and compilations, as they enrich the literature of Bengal, at the same time that they add to the store of our antiquarian knowledge. Pandit Satyavrata Samasrami is the profoundest Vedic scholar in Bengal, and has done much for the spread of knowledge by his editions and translations of

Yajurveda and *Sama Veda* and his researches in his journals. Mention may also be here made of the edition and translation of the *Rig Veda* by the present writer which caused a sensation among his orthodox countrymen in 1885. An abridged compilation and translation of the entire body of Hindu sacred literature by the same writer is now in course of publication under the title of *Hindu Sastra.* The late Dr. Ram Das Sen published a number of valuable essays on Indian antiquities, and Prafulla Chandra Banerjea has written on the Hindus and the Greeks. Mahesh Chandra Pal and Sita Nath Datta have edited and translated the *Upanishads*, and Kailas Chandra Sinha is a laborious worker in the field of antiquities. Excellent editions and translations of the *Bhagavatgita* have been published by several writers, and the Bangabasi press has presented the reading public with a translation of the *Dharma Sastras*, and is now publishing the *Puranas.* The ethusiastic Sisir Kumar Ghosh is engaged in writing a life of Chaitanya with all the fervour of a true believer, and other editors and translators, whose name is legion, are engaged in editing, translating and elucidating ancient works. Much of this work is perhaps superficial and even narrow in its scope and object, and is not therefore likely to last. But in spite of all that is sectarian and hollow, the increased attention now bestowed on ancient Hindu scriptures is likely to be attended with the best results, and will have the ultimate effect of drawing the people closer to the nourishing and life-

giving faith of the *Upanishads* and the *Vedanta* and the *Bhagavatgita*, which has been, and ever will be, the true faith of the Hindus.

HISTORY. History continues to be studied in English, and little progress has been made in this subject in the Bengali language, except in the matter of school books. Rajani Kanta Gupta's History of the Sepoy War is however a valuable and meritorious work, compiled from original sources.

SCIENTIFIC WORKS. Scientific instruction must also continue to be imparted in this country through the medium of the English language for a long time to come. Abinas Chandra Kabiratna's translations and editions of Sanscrit medical works deserve praise.

BIOGRAPHIES. It is a hopeful sign of the times that there has been a remarkable development in our biographical literature within the present generation. Some meritorious lives of the great men of other nations have been compiled, but the best biographical works in Bengali are the lives of Bengali authors. Pandit Ram Gati Nyayaratna's History of Bengali Literature is a praiseworthy compilation of the lives of our best writers. Nagendra Nath Chatterjea's life of Ram Mohan Rai is a meritorious work, but does not do full justice to its great subject. Mahendra Nath Vidyanidhi's life of Akhay Kumar Datta, Jogendra Chandra Basu's life of Madhu Sudan Datta, and Chandi Charan Banerjea's life of Vidyasagar have been referred to in the preceding pages, and are exhaustive and excellent works which leave little to be desired.

POETRY AND DRAMA. Mention has been made of the living dramatists and poets at the close of the last two chapters, and it is needless therefore to enumerate them here.

CHAPTER XX.

General Intellectual Progress.

Nineteenth century.

In the last seven chapters we have traced the progress of Bengali literature in the nineteenth century; it is a progress which we can contemplate with pleasure and with legitimate pride. Not a decade has passed but has brought forth new writers and a marked development. In the early tens and twenties, the great Raja Ram Mohan Rai carried on the work of progress, and the conservative section, headed by the learned Raja Radha Kanta Deb, stood up for ancient rites and customs; and the result was the formation of a healthy and vigorous prose literature. In the thirties, the poet Iswar Chandra Gupta came on the stage, and enriched Bengali poetry with his flowing and witty and interminable verse, displaying a copious power of the language unsuspected before. In the forties, more earnest workers came on the field; Akhay Kumar's dignified instructions, literary, scientific and moral, were listened to by the advanced school of readers in Bengal, and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar began his manly work in the cause of educational, social and literary reforms. In the fifties, Ram Narayan Tarkaratna founded the school of modern Bengali drama, and the great Madhu

Progress in Literature in the 19th century.

Sudan Datta erected his monumental epic in blank verse. In the sixties, Dina Bandhu Mitra developed dramatic literature, and Bankim Chandra began his new school of fiction and his long and brilliant rule in the world of letters which has terminated only with his death. In the seventies and eighties, new writers rose to distinction, and the genius of Hem Chandra, Nabin Chandra and Rabindra Nath sheds a lustre on the closing years of this eventful century.

But when we have spoken of the Bengali writers of the century, we have given only a partial and imperfect account of our country's progress. Englishmen are now the rulers of India, the work of administration and of the courts of justice is carried on in English, higher education is imparted in English, and the English is the one language in which the people of the different provinces in India can communicate with each other. Much of the literary work of our countrymen must therefore be done, and has been done, in English. Our most influential journals must be conducted in English, our best legal works must be composed in English, forensic eloquence can develop itself only in English, constitutional agitation and political work must be carried on in English, and even scientific and historical researches, meant for all the races of India and for European readers, must also be in English. It is necessary therefore to take a cursory view of the work done in English in order to grasp fully the progress made in the present century.

Raja Ram Mohan Rai was the first worker of the century in English as he was in Bengali; and his

Ram Mohan Rai's English writings.

controversies with Christian missionaries and his essays on social questions display an extent of knowledge, a power of reasoning, and a mastery over the English language, which surprised distinguished English writers of the day. His controversies have now been well known forgotten, but his translations of the ancient Upanishads into English were among the first attempts to explore into Sanscrit literature and Indian antiquities.

Raja Ram Mohan Rai helped in the founding of the Hindu College in 1817. The first *alumnii* of the College, however, left the path opened out by the eminent reformer, and for a time indulged in the dream of distinguishing themselves in English verse. Fired by the example of such men as Derozio and D. L. Richardson, and impelled by their ardent appreciation of western literature to which they had found a golden key, they employed their talents in contributing to English literature. Kasi Prasad Ghosh led the van, and his book of poems in English attracted much attention, as the first attempt of Young Bengal in English poetry. The talented Madhu Sudan Datta followed the example, and his *Captive Ladie* published in Madras in 1849 has already been spoken of.

Hindu College and compositions in English verse.

The Dutt family of Rambagan, sons and nephews of Rasamay Dutt of whom we have spoken before, also entered this field, and soon left all competitors behind. The early effusions of Shashi Chandra Dutt and Govind Chandra Dutt received the deserved

compliment of a favourable review in England in Blackwood's Magazine. Shashi Chandra lived to compile historical and other works which have been published in ten volumes, and Govind Chandra with some of his brothers and nephews published the *Dutt Family Album* in England. His talented daughter Taru Dutt then wrote a small collection of *Lays and Ballads of India* which Edmund Gosse brought to the favourable notice of the British public. H. C. Dutt has written his *Lotus Leaves* and G. C. Dutt his *Cherry Blossoms.* O. C. Dutt still delights us with his sonnets and translations from the German and the French, and J. C. Dutt has published the *Indian Pilgrim* in Spenserian verse.

Indian Antiquities.

But the dream of earning a fame by contributions to English Poetry has now passed away, and Young Bengal has succeeded better in more practical subjects of study. Not long after the time of Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Dr. K. M. Banerjea began his researches into Sanscrit learning. He embraced the Christian religion, and his perfect knowledge of Sanscrit and his command of a graceful English style made him an effective and powerful writer in the field of Indian antiquities. His *Dialogues on Hindu Philosophy* is a profound work, shewing a knowledge of the different systems of Hindu philosophy which very few scholars then possessed. But philosophical and scientific researches fail of their mark when they are made with the object of supporting a particular creed or faith, and Dr. Banerjea's work suffers from this reason, and has never been as acceptable

to scholars as it otherwise might have been. In his later days, Dr. Banerjea wrote another work, *Aryan Witness*, as profound as his first work, but marked by the same partizanship which takes away from its value.

Dr. Rajendralal Mitra succeeded him in antiquarian and scholastic researches, and soon acquired a European reputation by his learning. He started a cheap magazine called *Bibidhartha Sangraha* in 1851, in Bengali, for spreading useful information among his countrymen, but never succeeded well as a Bengali writer. On the other hand his researches into Indian antiquities were appreciated, and the Government of Bengal employed him, first in examining the ancient temples of Orissa, and then in examining the temple of Buddha Gaya. Two magnificent works, rich in photographic illustrations, and replete with information about the arts, manners and life of the ancient Hindus, were the result. In the meantime the scattered contributions of the scholar in learned journals were collected and published in two volumes, entitled *Indo-Aryans*, which will remain a monument of his learning.*

Works of information.

Less ambitious than the eminent Doctors were writers like Bhola Nath Chandra and Lal Bihari De who have embodied much useful information about their country in their excellent works. Bhola Nath's *Travels of a Hindu* continues to be a most interesting book of information

* I take this opportunity of acknowledging my great indebtedness to these volumes, in writing my work on *Civilization in Ancient India.*

about India, and Lal Bihari's *Peasant Life in Bengal* describes the life of the Bengal agriculturist in the guise of a pleasing novel.

Journalism.

In journalism, Harish Chandra Mukerjea took the lead about the middle of this century, and the ability, honesty and devotion with which he advocated the claims of his countrymen in the columns of the *Hindu Patriot*, which he founded, received deserved praise and recognition. Kristo Das Pal succeeded Harish Chandra worthily, and laboured for his country with real talent and sound judgment as the editor of the *Hindu Patriot* until the day of his death.

Public speakers.

Journalism and public-speaking have gone hand in hand, and the people of Bengal have continued to represent their wishes, and express their views and opinions, in the English language with marked ability. Ram Gopal Ghosh was the first great public speaker in Bengal, and he distinguished himself in the middle of this century by his eloquence and patriotism as the great tribune of the people. Surendra Nath Banerjea is a worthy successor of Ram Gopal Ghosh in the art of public speaking, and in the great work of the political advancement of his country. He has laboured steadily in this cause during the last quarter of the century, he has earned for his countrymen an increasing measure of self-government and of representative institutions, and his name will be associated by the future historian of Bengal with the political advancement of the people.

Political associations, strong in their influence and moderate in their representations, have also flourished in Bengal during this half century. The British Indian Association, an association of zemindars, is the oldest representative public body in the land. The Indian Association has been founded later on a more popular basis. And lastly, the National Congress unites the representative and best educated men from all parts of India in the work of political progress, and carries on a constitutional agitation with moderation and ability.

Political Associations.

Less loud, but not less deep, is the stream of religious and social progress which has broadened since the days of Raja Ram Mohan Rai. The task begun by him has been worthily continued by the venerable Debendra Nath Tagore, and the service he has done in continuing the work of moral progress cannot be overestimated. Trained under the moral influence of Debendra Nath, Keshab Chandra Sen founded a new section of the Brahma Samaj in 1868; and he and his followers will always be remembered as pioneers of social reform who, as a body, first ignored the caste system in the present century, and allowed inter-caste marriages. It is a fortunate circumstance that his life and teachings have been recorded by his friend and fellow-preacher Pratap Chandra Mazumdar in a work which is the best biographical work in English, written by a native of India. A third and more popular section of the Brahma Samaj was founded some ten years later, and the talented

Brahma Samaj.

Siva Nath Sastri and his colleagues are worthily carrying on the work of this advanced section of the Samaj.

The progress of the Brahma Samaj is an auspicious sign, because the Brahma Samaj really is an advanced section of the Hindu Samaj. One section of the Brahmas still call themselves Hindus, and all sections have adopted Hindu social and religious rites with some modifications, live Hindu lives, and derive their instruction from Hindu sacred works. The social progress of the Brahmas leavens the entire Hindu society, the two communities are drawing closer year after year, and when the young society will have counted its first hundred years of existence, its members will be reckoned as a section of advanced Hindus, as the founder of the Samaj meant them to be.

Hindu Reform.

Among the Hindus, outside the pale of the Brahma Samaj, there has been a better understanding among the different sections in recent years. There is a desire on the part of all sections, orthodox and heterodox, to draw closer together, and work for national progress and general good. The domination of the priestly caste which impeded the nation's progress is becoming feebler, the endeavour to bolster up priestly privileges is becoming fainter, the hurtful restrictions of caste are becoming weaker, among advanced Hindus in Bengal. There is a desire to sink social disunion, to ignore modern restrictions, and to turn towards the unpolluted religion and morality of the ancient scriptures to which modern Hindus are now turning for guidance.

There is hope in all this, as well as sign of progress.

Science and Industries.

In science, Young Bengal has not succeeded as well as he should have done. Excellent physicians have been turned out from the Medical College, and students distinguished for high proficiency in Chemistry and Physics, Mathematics and Astronomy, have come out of our colleges. But they have as yet given no indication of a capacity for original research. The want of costly instruments in this country may be one reason of this failure, the absence of a class of scientific workers is another. Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar's Science Association languishes for want of zealous workers, and the Industrial Association lately started has not yet perceptibly fostered industrial pursuits. Feeble attempts are made now and then in starting new industries, or renovating old ones under new methods. The spinning and weaving of cotton and jute, which grow so plentifully in this country, are done for us in England, and Bengal has not taken any appreciable share in cloth manufacture in which Bombay has set an example. Bengal has not yet distinguished herself in any way in science and industries under the influence of English education.

Law.

Law is a more congenial subject of study for the people of Bengal, and it has been remarked by so high an authority as Sir Henry Maine, that in this subject the nation has shewn something like true merit and genius. The ability, of which Prasanna Kumar Tagore and Rama Prasad Rai and other pleaders of their generation gave

evidence, attracted attention, and the highest judicial posts under Her Majesty's Government in India were soon won by the talented practioners. Rama Prasad Rai, son of Raja Ram Mohan Rai, was appointed a judge of the High Court of Calcutta, but he did not live to take his seat on the Bench. Sambhu nath Pandit followed, and later on, the talented Dwarka Nath Mitra distinguished himself by his eloquence, learning and zeal at the Bar, and eventually made one of the soundest and best judges of the High Court. Other able men have succeeded him, and Sir Ramesh Chandra Mitra acted as Chief Justice of Bengal for a period. Among the Bengal Mahommedans, Sayad Amir Ali has won a seat on the Bench of the High Court, and has also distinguished himself by his learned works on the *Life of Mahomet* and on *Mahommedan Law.* But Sayad Amir Ali's works are not the only meritorious legal works composed by natives of Bengal in modern times. The munificent Prasanna Kumar Tagore has founded a chair for lectures on law; and the lectures, annually delivered, mostly by natives of India, form a series of meritorious works on Indian Law.

Administration.

In the work of general administration, the people of the country have been admitted to take a share with greater caution, their efforts have been more arduous and prolonged, and their success therefore is a matter of greater congratulation. The administration of India is unconsciously affected by party triumphs in England, and it was

when a strong and healthy liberal reaction gave the seats in the Parliament to the real representatives of the British nation in 1832, that a real share in administrative work in India was for the first time given to the people of Bengal by Lord William Bentinck. The class of men whom he appointed, Sub Judges and Deputy Collectors, soon distinguished themselves by their ability, capacity for work, and knowledge of their country, and the creation of these appointments has strengthened the Government, and brought British rule more in touch with the people.

In 1852, Lord Russell revived the question of Reform in England, and the second Reform Bill was passed in 1867. It was within these years that the Covenanted Civil Service was thrown open to all Her Majesty's subjects, and the first native of India entered the Civil Service. In 1862, Satyendra Nath Tagore, a son of the venerable Debendra Nath Tagore, passed the Open Competition held in England for admission into the Civil Service of India. An ungenerous alteration in the system of marking, which immediately followed, prevented other natives of India from succeeding for some years. In 1869 however, three other natives of Bengal and one native of Bombay passed the Open Competition. And since their time, young men are proceeding to England in increasing numbers, year after year, to compete for the Civil Service, to qualify themselves for the Bar or as Doctors or Engineers, or merely to complete their general education.

The third and last Reform act, equalizing franchise

in counties and boroughs, was passed in England in 1885. The wave of liberal reaction reached, as on previous occasions, as far as India, the Local Self-Government Act and the Municipal Act of Lord Ripon were passed between 1884 and 1886, and the people were thus admitted to a larger share in the administration of local affairs.

Appointment to higher services after examinations in England.

The training of our young men in England has been attended with beneficial results. Men who have entered the higher ranks of services by passing examinations in England have taken, as Civilians, Doctors or Engineers, a responsible share in the work of administration to which their countrymen generally are not admitted. Bengali Civilians have held the posts of District Officers, District Judges and Divisional Commissioners, Bengali Medical men have held the post of Civil Surgeons, and Engineers have risen to the rank of Executive Engineers. This direct enlargement of the share taken by the people of Bengal in the administration of their country benefits the people, and makes British rule stronger and more popular in India.

Bar.

No less signal is the service rendered by those who have came out as members of the Bar. Mano Mohan Ghose, who went to England with Satyendra Nath Tagore, came out as the first Bengali Barrister. The poet Madhu Sudan Datta came out about the same time, and Womesh Chandra Bonnerjea came out shortly after, in

1868. Madhu Sudan is dead; but Ghosh and Bonnerjea are among the Nestors of the Bar at the present time. The service they have rendered to the country by helping the cause of justice and thus improving administration is great. But the service which they have rendered as workers for the political advancement of their countrymen is still more valuable. Younger Barristers are walking in their foot-steps, and our country owes and will continue to owe much to her talented and patriotic sons who have taken to the legal profession.

Social results of visit to Europe.

For the rest the great rush of our young men to Europe is silently causing a reform in our social rules. These young men ask no sanction from the leaders of the caste organization when they cross the seas and proceed to Europe, or when they return and live among their friends and relations, and occasionally marry out of caste. Orthodox Hindu society is gradually becoming familiarized with such departures from old and cast-iron rules, and silently accepts the fact that a living society must be progressive. The best way to do a thing is to do it, says the proverb, and Young Bengal, educated in Europe, knows the truth of this proverb. Social reforms for which men like the venerable Vidyasagar spent the best portions of their lives are being effected unostentatiously, without discussion in pamphlets and journals, and without the sanction of learned conclaves of Pandits. A deed done is worth more than years of idle discussion; Hindu society feels it, and is gradually accepting the inevitable.

Conclusion.

Young Bengal has his faults, and is not in want of "candid friends" to point them out to him. But his critics, who are so severe on his failings, know little of his difficulties and his struggles. Within the present century, Young Bengal has endeavoured to form a healthy national literature, has striven for social and religious reforms in the light of the ancient Hindu scriptures, has distinguished itself in law and administration, and works hopefully and manfully for the good of the country. There is reason for hope in all this, but there is more reason for earnest work in the future; and it rests entirely with ourselves to work out the results already foreshadowed. There is not a nation in Europe which has not shaped its own destiny by centuries of hard and arduous toil in past ages. We live in happier times, and under the influence of a heathier liberal opinion, and it rests with ourselves whether under these influences, and under the generous guidance of England, we shall move onward in the path of national progress, as all English colonies are doing in this age of progress.

FINIS.

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